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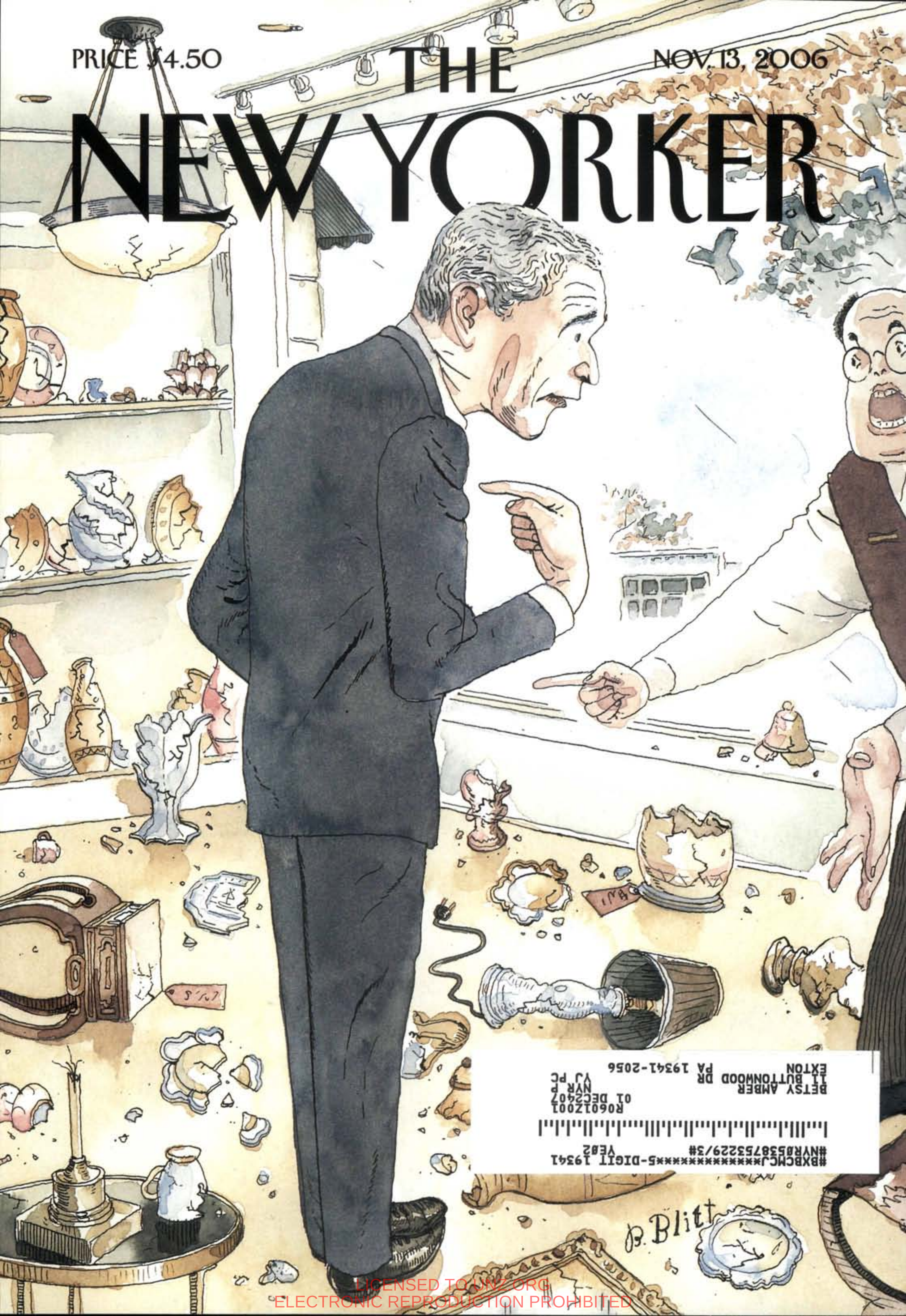
THE NEW YORKER

NOV. 13, 2006



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THE NEW YORKER

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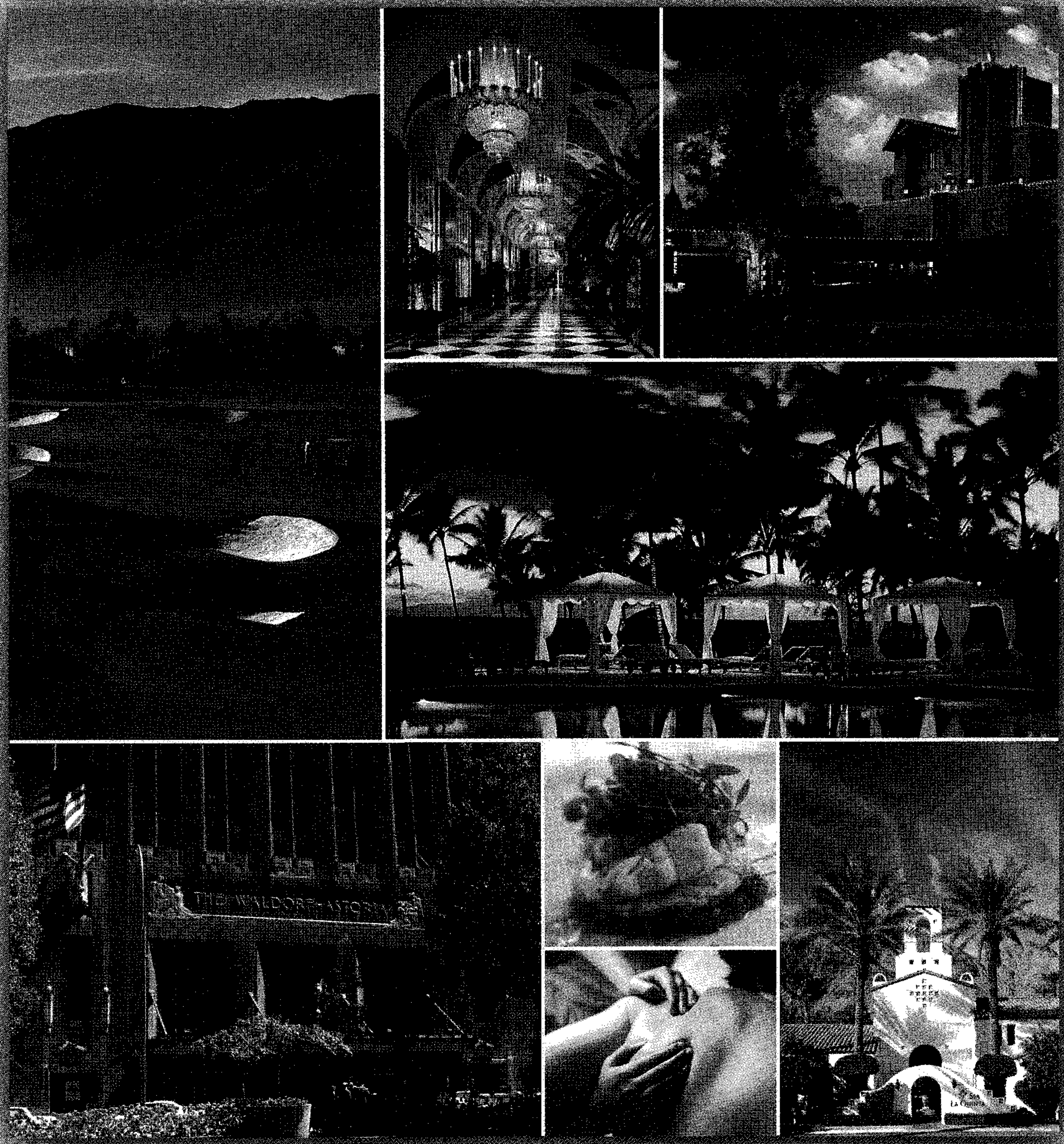

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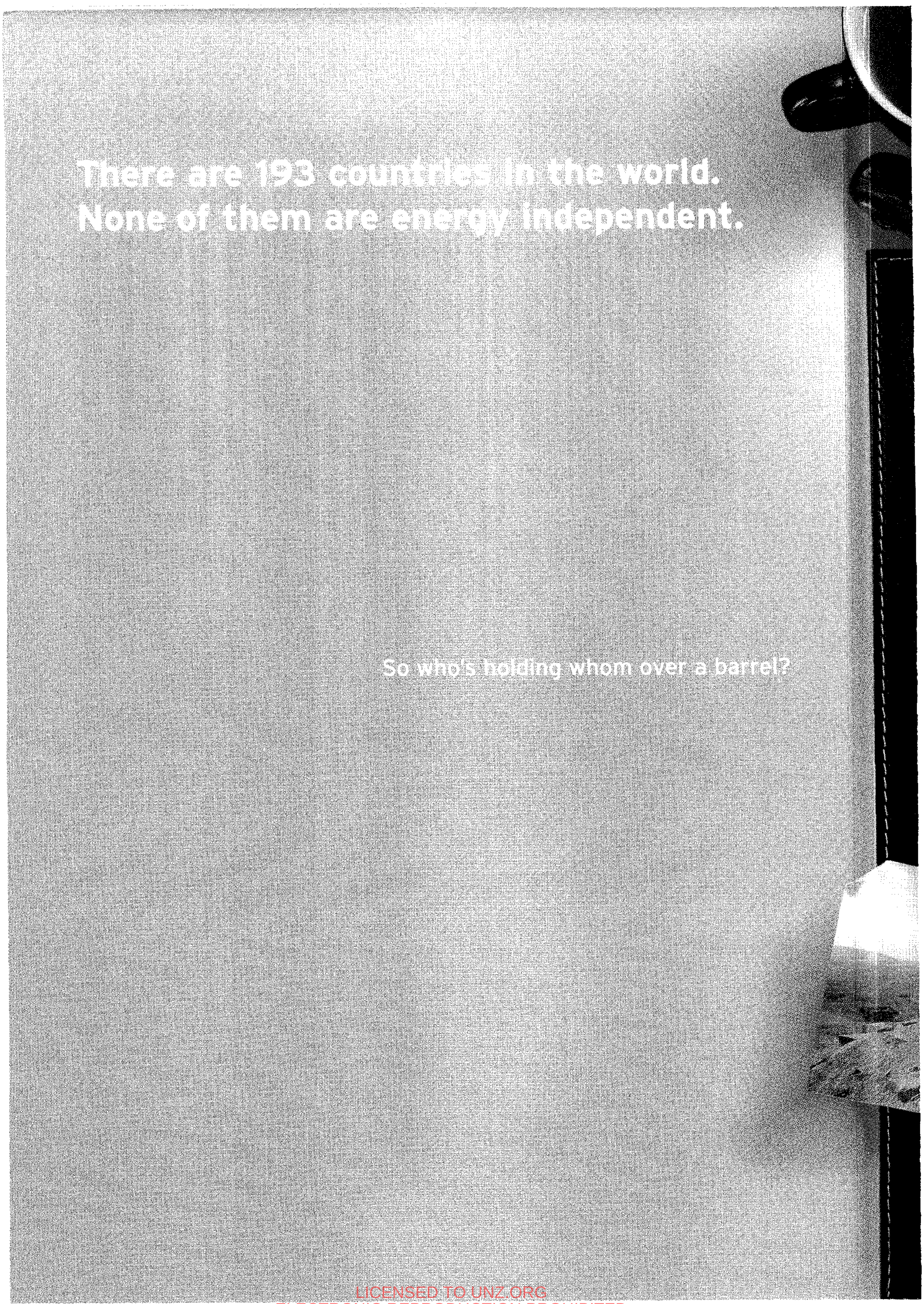
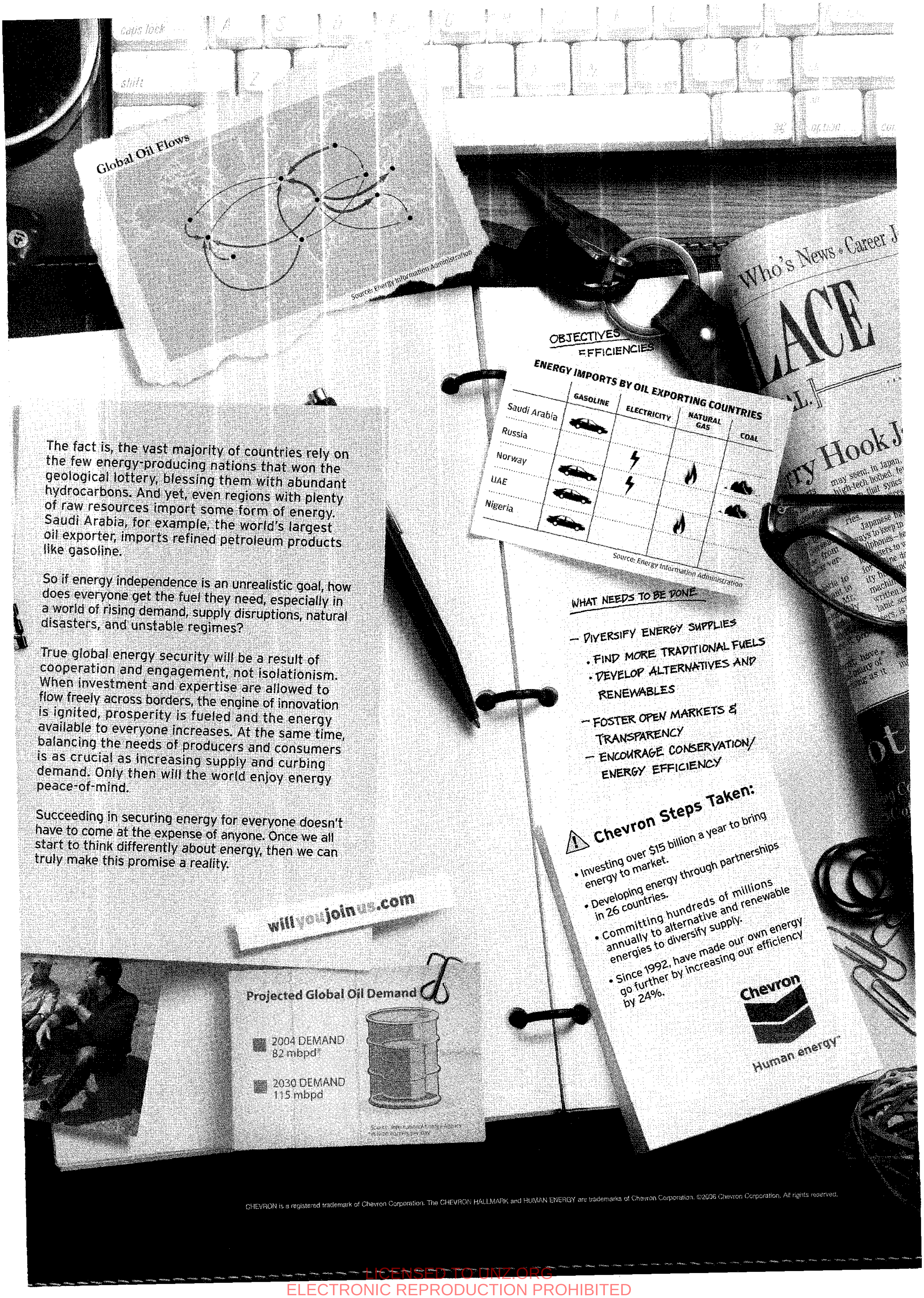

There are 193 countries in the world.
None of them are energy independent.
So who's holding whom over a barrel?



The fact is, the vast majority of countries rely on the few energy-producing nations that won the geological lottery, blessing them with abundant hydrocarbons. And yet, even regions with plenty of raw resources import some form of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, the world's largest oil exporter, imports refined petroleum products like gasoline.

So if energy independence is an unrealistic goal, how does everyone get the fuel they need, especially in a world of rising demand, supply disruptions, natural disasters, and unstable regimes?

True global energy security will be a result of cooperation and engagement, not isolationism. When investment and expertise are allowed to flow freely across borders, the engine of innovation is ignited, prosperity is fueled and the energy available to everyone increases. At the same time, balancing the needs of producers and consumers is as crucial as increasing supply and curbing demand. Only then will the world enjoy energy peace-of-mind.

Succeeding in securing energy for everyone doesn't have to come at the expense of anyone. Once we all start to think differently about energy, then we can truly make this promise a reality.

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OBJECTIVES

EFFICIENCIES

ENERGY IMPORTS BY OIL EXPORTING COUNTRIES

	GASOLINE	ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	COAL
Saudi Arabia	🚗			
Russia		⚡	🔥	▲
Norway	🚗	⚡		▲
UAE	🚗		🔥	
Nigeria	🚗			

Source: Energy Information Administration

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLIES
  - FIND MORE TRADITIONAL FUELS
  - DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES AND RENEWABLES
- FOSTER OPEN MARKETS & TRANSPARENCY
- ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION/ ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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▨ 2004 DEMAND
82 mbpd*

▨ 2030 DEMAND
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Source: International Energy Agency
*million barrels per day

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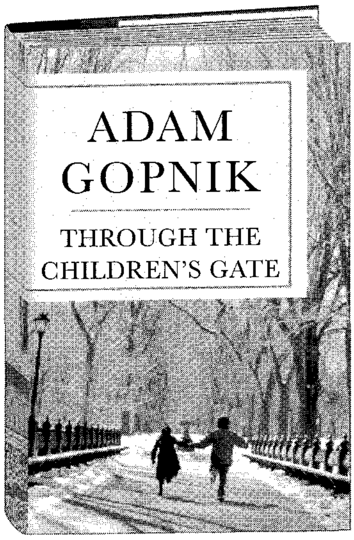
From the author of
the #1 bestselling
Paris to the Moon



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—SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

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"Some of the best writing on parenthood I've read, by turns poignant, funny & wise"
—SEATTLE TIMES

"Wonderful"
—BOSTON GLOBE

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CONTRIBUTORS

Janet Malcolm ("Strangers in Paradise," p. 54) has a show of collages at Lori Bookstein Fine Art, in New York.

John Cassidy (Comment, p. 35), the author of "Dot.con," covers economics and finance for the magazine.

Ben McGrath (The Talk of the Town, p. 38; "Holy Rollers," p. 44) is a staff writer.

Ian Frazier (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 52) has published eight books, including "Gone to New York," which came out in paperback earlier this year.

Barry Blitt (Cover) illustrated the children's book "The 39 Apartments of Ludwig van Beethoven," which was published in September.

Rebecca Mead (Books, p. 88) has been writing for the magazine since 1997.

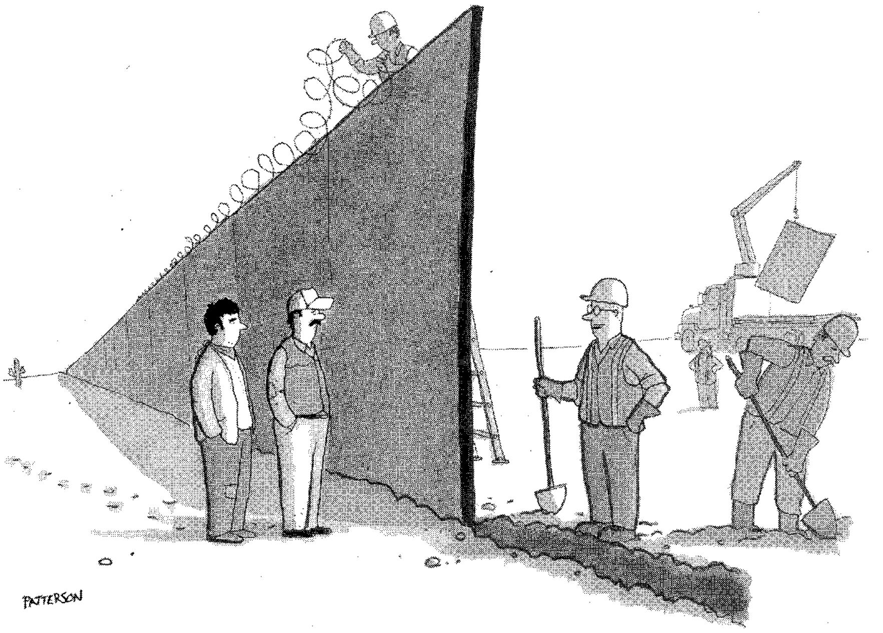
George Packer ("The Megacity," p. 62) is the author of "The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq," which is available in paperback.

Cynthia Zarin ("Seeing Things," p. 76), a staff writer, just published a children's book, "Saints Among the Animals," with illustrations by Leonid Gore.

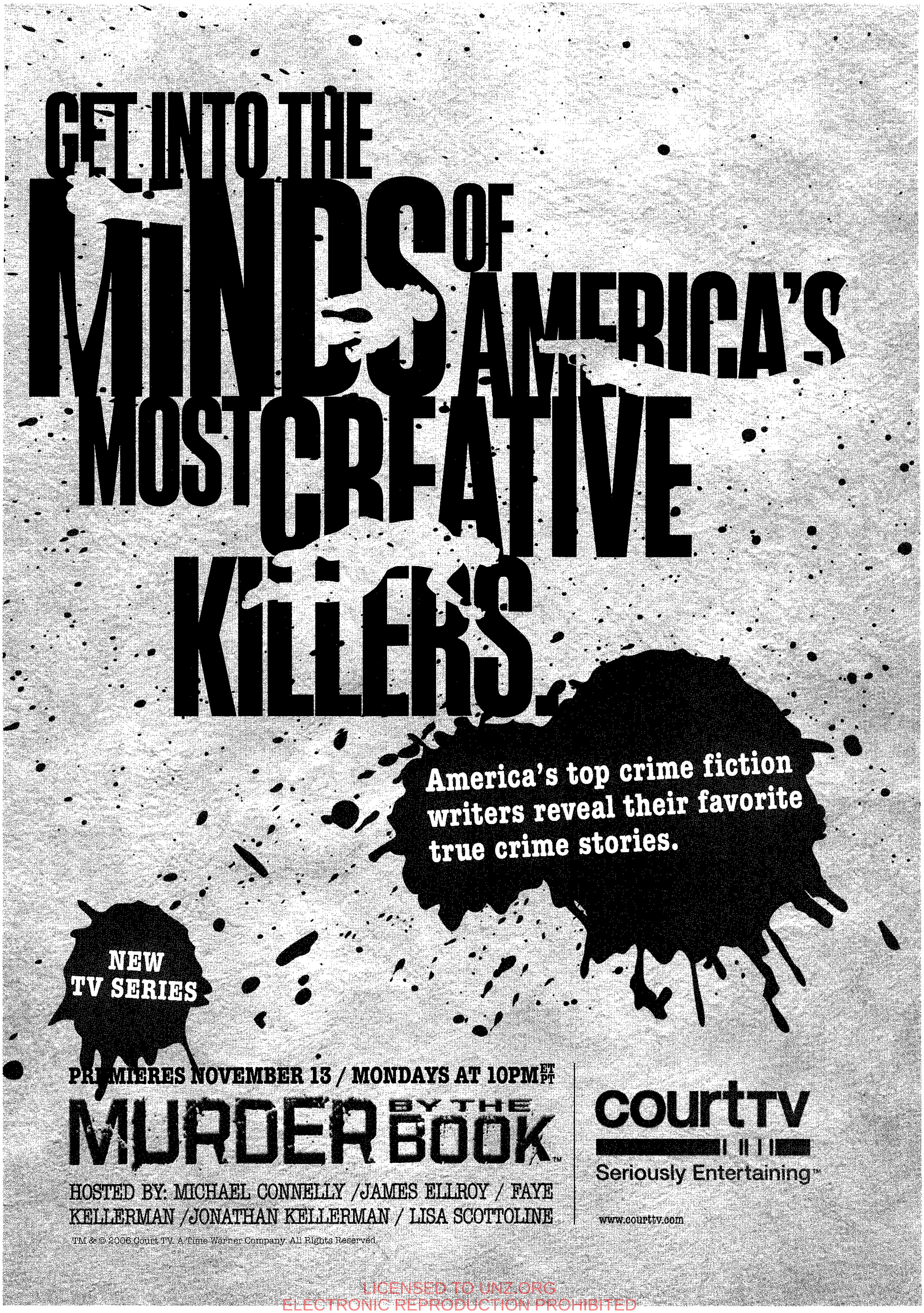
Helen Simpson (Fiction, p. 84) has a new collection of short stories, "In the Driver's Seat," coming out in May.

Rachel Cohen (Books, p. 92) is the author of "A Chance Meeting: Intertwined Lives of American Writers and Artists." She teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

Janusz Szuber (Poem, p. 94) has published seventeen collections of poems in his native Polish. Translated poems have appeared in *Image* and *Seneca Review*. ♦



"You fellas need a job?"



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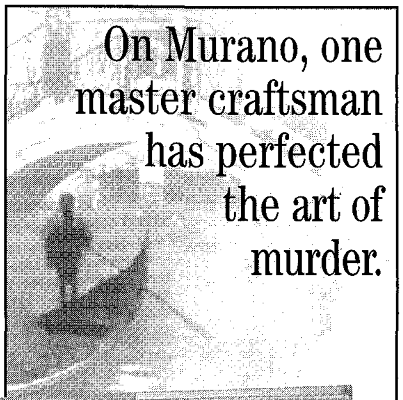

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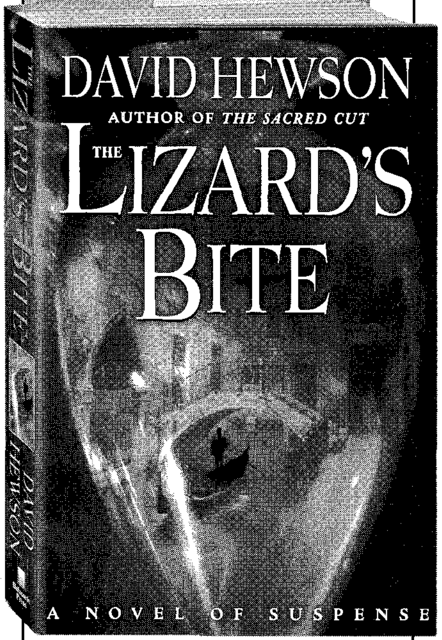

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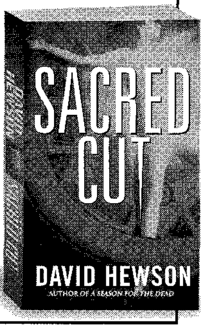


THE MAIL

GIVING BIRTH

Atul Gawande does an excellent job of describing the current obstetrical care in the United States, but he falls short in providing sufficient context or analysis to evaluate its merits ("The Score," October 9th). Our Cesarean-section rate is twice as high as the standard set by the World Health Organization, which states that the C-section rate in any region should be no higher than fifteen per cent. Meanwhile, the U.S. has more infant deaths per thousand than thirty-one other nations, most of which have lower C-section rates. Cesarean sections can be lifesaving for mothers and babies, but although concern for maternal and fetal health certainly motivates the decision to go ahead with the procedure, these rates are also heavily influenced by our fear of and desire to control natural processes, financial incentives for operative procedures, turf battles within the health-care community, and societal pressure to produce more in less time.

Audrey Stillerman, M.D.
Chicago, Ill.

I have performed hundreds of Cesareans and have occasionally used my orthopedic or general-surgery colleagues as assistants. They often find the operation weird and uncomfortable, while I find it simple and elegant. Somehow, removing an organ or a limb is easier for them than delivering a screaming, wiggling baby. Gawande probably gives too much credit to obstetricians for improving childbirth outcomes and not enough credit to basic scientific advances. Now our field must work on reducing the ever-growing Cesarean-section rate and eliminating premature birth.

Kathleen Harner, M.D.
Tuba City, Ariz.

Gawande's nostalgia for the "arts" of natural childbirth (including forceps delivery, which hardly seems natural) underlines a troubling cultural double standard in the health care of men and women. Having endured, ten years ago, a delivery very similar to that of Elizabeth Rourke, I, too, felt disappointment and a sense of failure after undergoing a Cesarean section. And yet it would seem absurd that patients undergoing other necessary surgical interventions, such as a knee replacement or a kidney transplant, would ever feel this kind of guilt or sense of personal responsibility about their procedures. The "natural" course of life, i.e., without medical intervention, is brutal and short. The "natural" course of childbirth, as evidenced in the Third World today, and in the centuries before modern medicine, is just as brutal, often resulting in fistulas, uterine prolapse, and infection and death of the mother, the child, or both. Let us not romanticize this.

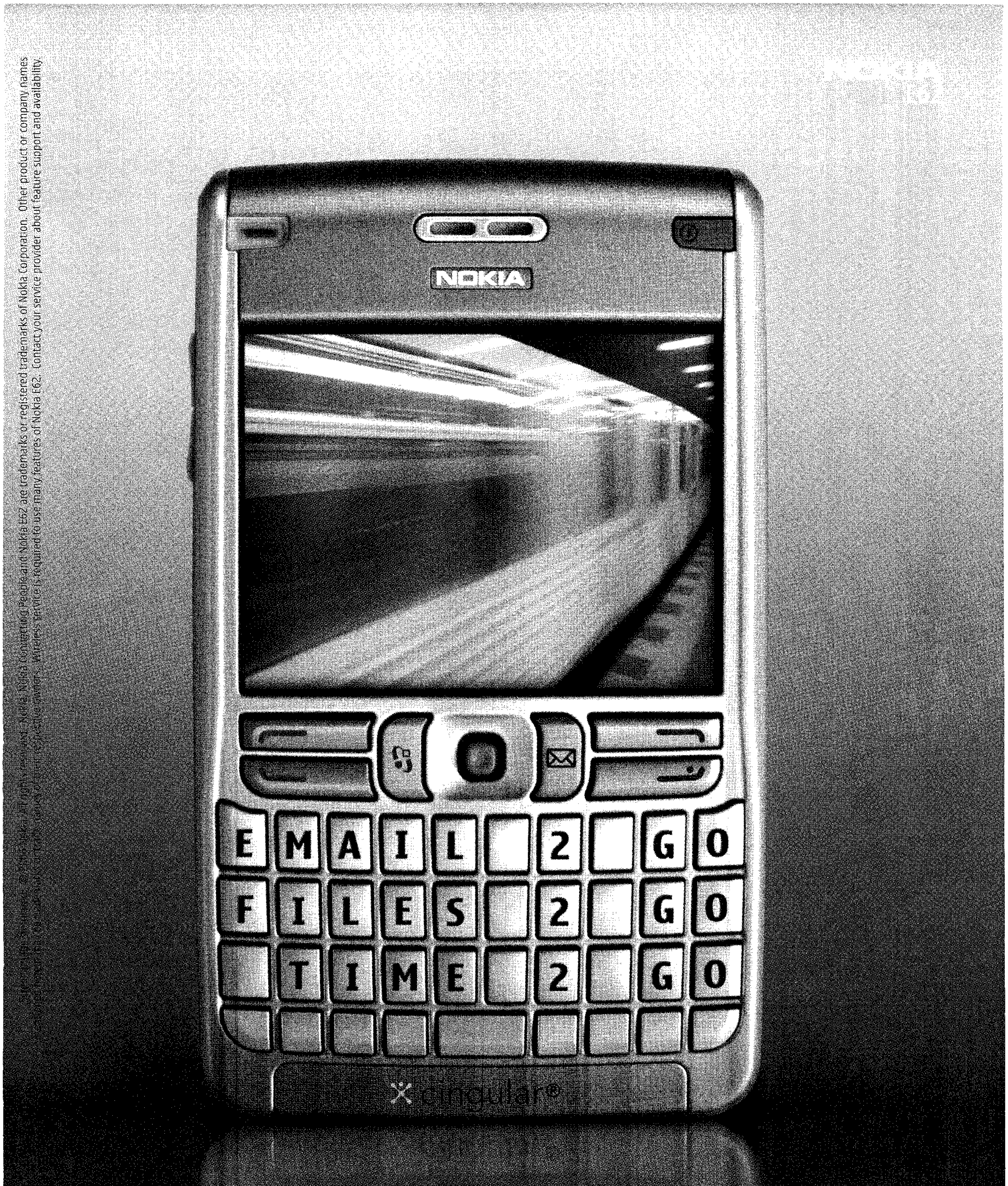
Nina Belfor
Princeton, N.J.

The fact that few women in the developed world die in childbirth today is due less to the rising rate of Cesarean sections than to accessible prenatal care; widespread screening for the pregnancy condition known as preeclampsia; the recognition of basic infection-control techniques, such as hand-washing; the use of antibiotics to prevent and treat infection; and effective means of controlling hemorrhage. The improved over-all health of women has also contributed, so that fewer women enter pregnancy with problems such as anemia, tuberculosis, and rickets. There's plenty of blood, sweat, and tears in normal birth; there's just not major abdominal surgery, with its inherent complications.

Ronnie Lichtman
Associate Professor and Chair
Midwifery Education Program
SUNY *Downstate Medical Center*
Brooklyn, N.Y.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.



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Walton Ford's watercolors are now at the Brooklyn Museum. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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12	13	14				

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
MAN ALONE

"Woyzeck," a play about a soldier losing his mind, was written but never finished by the German playwright Georg Büchner; Werner Herzog's film from 1979 stars Klaus Kinski. The Gate Theatre London's production, adapted and directed by Daniel Kramer, opens this week at St. Ann's Warehouse. (See page 12.)

NIGHT LIFE
BLOOMING

Emilie Simon, a young French vocalist and songwriter who performs sonically elaborate material in her native tongue and in English, is touring the U.S. for the first time in support of her début Stateside release, "The Flower Book." She'll bring songs from the collection, which is more "Fleurs du Mal" than F.T.D., to Joe's Pub. (See page 14.)

ART
IN THE DRINK

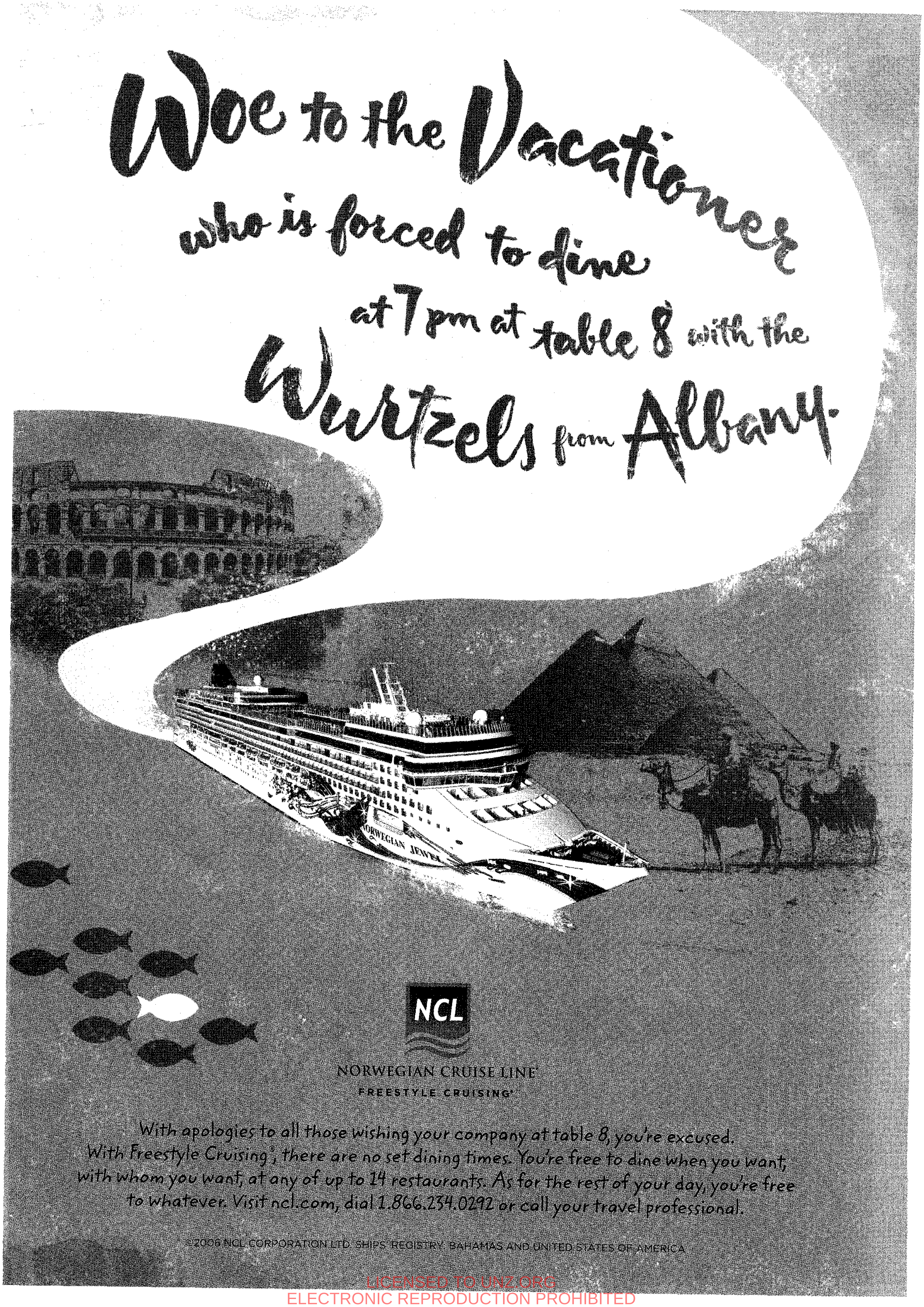
Bryan Hunt's recently christened "Coenties Ship" sculpture in Lower Manhattan pays tribute to New York's history as a port town—although no champagne bottle was broken over its steel-and-glass hull, thankfully. The ship is joined by a show of his watery "Flume" works at Danese, in Chelsea. (See page 19.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
DIAMOND LIFE

If any American group can be said to own Bartók's six quartets, it is the Juilliard String Quartet, which gave the American première of the full cycle at Tanglewood in 1948. After many personnel changes, the group marks its sixtieth anniversary with another cycle, offered in two concerts at Alice Tully Hall. (See page 24.)

MOVIES
INSIDE ITALY

The director Marco Tullio Giordana has a feel for the stuff of Italian life. He made a splash with his six-hour TV series, "The Best of Youth," a melodrama that follows two brothers through the nineteen-sixties and seventies. BAM presents it, along with most of his other films, including "The Hundred Steps," based on the true story of an anti-Mafia activist in Sicily. (See page 29.)



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART ONE: VOYAGE
The first of three plays by Tom Stoppard about a group of nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals. The ensemble cast includes Ethan Hawke, Brían F. O'Byrne, Jennifer Ehle, Billy Crudup, Martha Plimpton, and Amy Irving. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

COMPANY
John Doyle directs the Stephen Sondheim and George Furth Tony Award-winning musical from 1970, in which a bachelor observes the lives of five married couples. In previews. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

DARK MATTERS
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's drama about mystical happenings surrounding a Midwestern family. Trip Cullman directs. Previews begin Nov. 10. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!—THE MUSICAL
A musical-theatre version of the children's story. With book and lyrics by Timothy Mason. Directed by Matt August. Opens Nov. 8. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

DURANGO
The world première of a new play by Julia Cho, about a Korean father who embarks on a road trip with his teen-age sons. Directed by Chay Yew. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS
Kathleen Chalfant stars in Bathsheba Doran's adaptation of the Dickens classic. Will Pomerantz directs. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED
The Off Broadway hit play by Douglas Carter Beane, about a closeted movie star and his overzealous agent, moves to Broadway. Starring Julie White, Tom Everett Scott, and Johnny Galecki. Scott Ellis directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 13. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARY POPPINS
The smash hit from London's West End comes to Broadway. Starring Ashley Brown as Mary Poppins and Gavin Lee as Bert; Richard Eyre directs. In previews. (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747.)

LES MISÉRABLES
A new production of the musical based on Victor Hugo's epic, set in nineteenth-century France. John Caird directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 9. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

REGRETS ONLY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the première of a new comedy of manners by Paul Rudnick, about the social mores of a set of wealthy Manhattanites. Starring Christine Baranski and George Grizzard. In previews. (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

STRIKING 12
A musical created and performed by the pop band GrooveLily, about a man who is lured out of his shell by a salesgirl on New Year's Eve. Ted Sperling directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 12. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER
Blythe Danner stars in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Tennessee Williams's psychological drama. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

365 DAYS/365 PLAYS
Suzan-Lori Parks wrote a play per day for a year; the Public kicks off a yearlong nationwide presentation of those works. Begins Nov. 13. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
A Chekhov International Theatre Festival production, directed by Declan Donnellan, of Shakespeare's mistaken-identity comedy. In Russian with English supertitles. Nov. 7-12. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

TWO TRAINS RUNNING
Signature Theatre Company continues its August Wilson series with this portrayal of a Pittsburgh diner in 1969. Directed by Lou Bellamy. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

THE VERTICAL HOUR
Julianne Moore stars in the world première of David Hare's play about a young war correspondent turned political-science professor whose beliefs are challenged when she meets her boyfriend's English father (Bill Nighy). Also starring Andrew Scott. Sam Mendes ("Cabaret," "Take Me Out") directs. Previews begin Nov. 9. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

WOYZECK
The U.S. première of the Gate Theatre London's production of Georg Büchner's drama about a soldier's spiral into madness. Adapted and directed by Daniel Kramer. Previews begin Nov. 13. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. 718-254-8779.)

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SUVs can be clumsy and oafish.
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SUVs are too much of a bad thing.

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NOW PLAYING

BHUTAN
Daisy Foote has fashioned a play as effective as it is classical in structure. A fatherless family in small-town New Hampshire is derailed by the arrest of the son, Warren (Jedadiah Schultz), making life nearly intolerable for those left behind. His sixteen-year-old sister, Frances (Sarah Lord), finds herself called upon by their implacable mother (Tasha Lawrence) to sacrifice her own dreams of college in order to be a confidante to her imprisoned older brother. Foote writes acutely about the way family loyalty can become a bitterly fraying knot that binds and chafes, and the director, Evan Yionoulis, succeeds in creating an atmosphere of claustrophobic intensity. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

BUTLEY
In Simon Gray's drama from 1971 (directed by Nicholas Martin), Ben Butley (Nathan Lane) is an alcoholic chain-smoker, a bored and unsupportive teacher, an indifferent father, a sad-sack bisexual who, in the course of the play, is dumped by both his wife and his protégé, Joey Keyston (Julian Ovenden). Lane, who does a passable English accent, puts his comic expertise behind the lines and makes them pay. If he lacks the sinew of Alan Bates, who first played the part, Lane nonetheless manages to work himself up into a fine frenzy that is uniquely his own. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/6/06.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CLEAN HOUSE
A new play by Sarah Ruhl, about a doctor whose housekeeper prefers telling jokes to cleaning the apartment. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

DANCING VS. THE RAT EXPERIMENT
Witness Relocation presents this dance-theatre piece, choreographed by Dan Safer. (Reviewed in this issue.) (La Mama Annex, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

EVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL
Christopher Bond and Hinton Battle co-direct this sendup of Sam Raimi's horror franchise, about a man with a chainsaw for a hand and the undead baddies he whups with it. Most of the jokes suffer from the same problem as the zombies in the original movies: you can see them coming from a mile away. But a giddy sequence in the second act nearly redeems the whole enterprise, as our hero (Ryan Ward) lets it rip on an entire cast of dancing demons, uncorking a cascade of liquid gore. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

GREY GARDENS
Christine Ebersole and Mary Louise Wilson star in Doug Wright's musical based on the 1975 Maysles-brothers documentary about Edith Bouvier Beale and her daughter, Little Edie. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

POST MORTEM
A. R. Gurney's comedy is set in a dystopian future, in which far-right censors have driven any political opposition into the ground. Dexter (Christopher Kromer), an underachieving college senior with a yen for his theatre instructor, Alice (Tina Benko), believes he's unearthed a neglected masterwork by the obscure dead-white-male playwright A. R. Gurney. Dexter has found the only extant copy of Gurney's unknown final play (entitled "Post Mortem"); he's convinced that it will ignite a revolution when it's staged. Unfortunately, the slapdash texture of the actual play tends to undermine any fun to be had contemplating the advent of its post-modern double. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

THE THUGS
Adam Bock's brief, unnerving play is set in a drab cell of a large office building, where a group of clock-watching temps pass the time nursing small grudges and chasing stray bits of gossip. Once the rumor spreads, from another floor, that a killer might be on the loose, the tenuous civility of the office begins to fall apart. Writing in halting, elliptical dialogue, Bock uses this scenario to pick apart the chilly psychology of the workplace, but he doesn't push the plot too far. Instead, he exposes the repressed humanity of his characters by standing back to let them implicate themselves. (SoHo Repertory, 46 Walker St. 212-868-4444. Through Nov. 12.)

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'
Twyla Tharp conceived, directed, and choreographed this musical, set at a circus, to the music of Bob Dylan. The owner and ringmaster of the circus is Captain Ahrab (Thom Sesma), an evil tyrant who abuses his innocent son, Coyote (Michael Arden); his kind, worse-for-the-wear girlfriend, Cleo (Lisa Brescia); and everyone else in his vicinity. A great deal of the show consists of circus acts; this is the thing for which all else—realism, drama—was shoved aside, and which was supposed to convey the essence of Dylan. But without any expansion of the characters you weary of them quickly, and what is a Twyla Tharp show if it doesn't have dance? Dance is what she knows how to do, and when she doesn't do it there's not a lot to watch. (11/6/06) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

Also Playing

ARMS AND THE MAN: Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **EMERGENCE-SEE!:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. **THE HAIRY APE:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **HEARTBREAK HOUSE:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. **LOSING LOUIE:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **MARTIN SHORT: FAME BECOMES**

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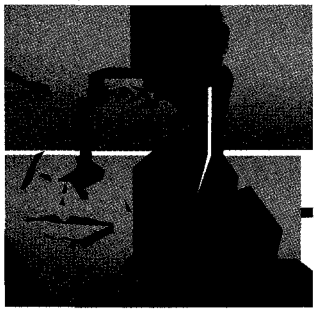
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MR. WILSON

As one of the world's greatest experimental-theatre directors, Robert Wilson has, over the course of his nearly fifty-year career, traversed the world, mounting his stark, repetitious, and reflective works in locales ranging from Iran to Mexico. With his prodigious imagination and formidable will, this native Texan, who failed to adhere to his powerful father's desire that he pursue a career in law, has created a theatrical language like no other. He takes small moments—sipping a cup of tea, walking across a stage—and makes them resonant with dread, or with the glory of being. In "Absolute Wilson," Katharina Otto-Bernstein's somewhat shoddily produced film portrait of the artist, we are provided a look at not only Wilson's sensibility but at the window dressing he used to make it attractive to audiences. Family snapshots, along with interviews with Wilson's sister, Suzanne, and Wilson himself provide a credible report on the truth at the heart of his stage designs, the elaborate metaphors he dresses his characters up in: the young gay boy who stuttered and then found his true language in silence.



—*Hilton Als*

ME: Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . . :** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **WRECKS:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

AVERY FISHER HALL
Lincoln Center (212-721-6500)—Nov. 9: A Bob Dylan tribute featuring a slew of artists, including **Patti Smith, Chris** and **Rich Robinson** (of the Black Crowes), **Phil Lesh** (formerly of the Grateful Dead), **Lee Ranaldo** (of Sonic Youth), **Warren Haynes** (of the Allman Brothers), and **Al Kooper** (the organist on "Like a Rolling Stone" and the ex-leader of Blood, Sweat & Tears).

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—The pedal-steel player **Lucky Oceans** (a.k.a. Reuben Gosfield), who was a founding member of the western-swing juggernaut Asleep at the Wheel, drops by this Brooklyn club on Nov. 9 with material from "Secret Steel," a collection of mostly instrumentals. Nov. 13: The **Luminescent Orchestrii,** a string quintet that combines Romanian, Balkan, and klezmer melodies with hip-hop beats, tango, Appalachian fiddle, and a punk attitude.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 14: The Acoustic Africa tour brings together **Habib Koité, Vusi Mahlasela,** and **Dobet Gnahoré.**

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 8: The eighties pop giant **Lionel Richie.** Back when Ronald Reagan was President and Saddam Hussein was considered an ally, no house party or romantic interlude was complete without the softly funky dance anthems and soulful ballads of the ex-Commodore, who delivered an unrivalled string of hits during those years, including "All Night Long (All Night)," "Penny Lover," "Dancing on the Ceiling," and "Hello." His celebrity has been overshadowed recently by the antics of Nicole Richie, his daughter, but he recently released a new album, "Coming Home," that has put him on the charts again.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 8: **Spencer Dickinson** is the Blues Explosion leader, Jon Spencer, and Luther and Cody Dickinson, of the North Mississippi Allstars. Nov. 10: London's **Scritti Politti** started off as an experimental post-punk band in the late seventies before it morphed into the sleek pop act that delivered the 1985 hit "Perfect Way." The band's latest album, "White Bread Back Beer," boasts a svelte sound punctuated by winsome lyrics and the ageless vocals of its front man, Green Gartside. Nov. 13: **Robert Pollard,** the beer-swilling poet and former leader of Guided by Voices.

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—Nov. 9: The Brooklyn-based artist **Andy Friedman** (a contributor to this magazine) belts out country songs about love, highways, booze, and painting with a growl that's unexpectedly tender. His first studio album, "Taken Man," proves that beauty doesn't have to be pretty.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 11-12: The **Blood Brothers** are an explosive combo from Seattle who are keen on high-decibel, agitated guitar rock and screaming. Their new album, "Young Machetes," is a glorious headache. With the volatile Texan combo **And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 8: **Forro in the Dark** brings more of the blue-collar party music from Brazil's northeastern interior to Gotham with the release of its new album, "Bonfires of São João," which features contributions from David Byrne, Miho Hatori, and others. Nov. 13: The singer **Emilie Simon's** layered songs incorporate unusual instrumentation (for one, on the soundtrack of the original French release of the hit documentary "March of the Penguins," she rubbed ice cubes together to create a beat). She has two albums available in France, but her work has been difficult to get in the U.S. until now. "The Flower Book" comes out this week. She's appearing with **El Perro del Mar,** which is the beguiling Swedish vocalist Sarah Assbring, whose pop confections about loneliness, melancholy, and desperation sound sweet but leave a bitter aftertaste.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 10: How Axl Rose manages to keep the good ship **Guns N' Roses** afloat without a single fellow-member of the original band—never mind a confirmed release date for the long-awaited, practically mythological comeback album, "Chinese Democracy"—remains one of the greatest wonders of our age.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Nov. 14: The Scottish acoustic-guitar legend **Bert Jansch** returns to New York City for the first time in nearly a decade. Jansch, whose career began in the early sixties, was an enormous influence on a wide spectrum of rock giants, including Neil Young (who has described him as the Jimi Hendrix of acoustic guitar) and Jimmy Page, who took his arrangement of the traditional "Blackwaterside" and put it on the first Led Zeppelin album as "Black Mountain Side." Jansch's excellent new record, "The Black Swan," features his honest, thin voice alongside the vocals of such guests as Devendra Banhart and Beth Orton, but it's the achingly beautiful guitar work, a trance-inducing distillation of the sitarist Ravi Shankar and the Elizabethan composer John Dowland, that really sings.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Nov. 10: **Lyrics Born,** the nom de hip-hop of the Bay Area musician and entrepreneur Tom Shimura, delivers politically charged, deeply introspective raps in a fast-paced singsong style. That is, when he's not singing in a gruff voice or leading the crowd in call-and-response chants that turn his shows into funky parties in the tradition of George Clinton. He's touring with the turntablist **Cut Chemist,** formerly of the Jurassic 5. Nov. 13: The harpist and singer **Joanna Newsom** plays a pair of shows.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Nov. 11: **Paula West** has a winning combination of Nancy Wilson-like élan and mountain-spring diction; all she needs now is a major-label recording contract.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Nov. 8: The pianist and composer **Anthony Coleman,** a mainstay of New York City's avant-garde scene since the late seventies, plays tribute to the free-jazz prophet Ornette Coleman.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 7-12: The annual Django Reinhardt NY Festival unites **Dorado Schmitt** and other fast-fingered guitarists from abroad with sympathetic locals, including the saxophonists **Ken Peplowski, James Carter,** and **Joel Frahm.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 7-12: The **Chick Corea Elektric Band.** Corea's fully loaded fusion ensemble gets a jolt with the addition of the extraordinary electric bassist **Victor Wooten.**

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Nov. 7-Dec. 31: The gruff-voiced singer and producer **Steve Tyrell.**

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
Nov. 9: The wry pianist, singer, and songwriter **Mose Allison** appears on a bill with the guitar-

KIM DEMARCO

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ist **Marty Grosz** and the reed player **Ken Peplowski.** The masterly bebop alto saxophonist **Charles McPherson** fills out this odd but potentially satisfying night. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460.)

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The guitarist **Russell Malone** exhibits his versatility by pairing off with the Brazilian fretman **Romero Lubambo** on Nov. 7-9 and then bringing in his own swinging quartet Nov. 10-12.

MERKIN CONCERT HALL

129 W. 67th St. (212-501-3330)—Nov. 14: A "Reissue: Classic Recordings Live" show with the **Andrew Hill** octet performing the music of "Passing Ships." More genuinely obscure than classic, "Passing Ships" was first recorded by the brilliant pianist Hill in 1969, then was mysteriously shelved for three decades. A 2003 release finally revealed its full compositional wealth. Although its key original soloists, including Woody Shaw, are gone, Hill will attempt to bring the richly detailed music to life again.

MINTON'S PLAYHOUSE

208 W. 118th St. (212-864-8346)—This Harlem club is synonymous with the birth of bebop. Throughout the nineteen-forties, the cream of the jazz scene jammed with such upstarts as Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Kenny Clarke as a new music came into being. Closed since the early seventies, the legendary night spot reopened in the spring. Nov. 10-11: The bassist **Mickey Bass,** a hard-bop veteran, brings his Manhattan Burn Unit in to stir up new memories.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Nov. 7-19: The **Bill Charlap** trio is about as good as mainstream piano jazz gets these days. Working with the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington,** Charlap displays the poise and taste, and, increasingly, the depth of such grand stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—What would happen if a work by Degas, say, wandered into **"Americans in Paris, 1860-1900,"** an enjoyable show of questing Yankees abroad? Pictures by the expatriates Whistler, Cassatt, and Sargent—and by Homer and Eakins, whose independence makes their inclusion dubious—would defer but survive; the rest might suggest a fox-invaded henhouse. Unlike Parisians, Americans then could never forget about Paris. On the outside looking in, they tipped French fashions sideways into genteel formulae, notably that of the oxymoron "American Impressionism." Instances of confident audacity, such as Cassatt's "Little Girl in a Blue Armchair" (1878), startle. Through Jan. 28. ♦ **"Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde."** The Parisian gallerist Vollard (1866-1939) was an early champion of Matisse, Bonnard, van Gogh, and many others; this unusually canted show comprises samples of the work that they made with his encouragement and patronage. The two giants of the show's title are represented with canvases from solo shows that Vollard mounted in 1895 and 1901, respectively. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"New Orleans After the Flood: Photographs by Robert Polidori."** Through Dec. 10. ♦ **"Sean Scully: Wall of Light."** Through Jan. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Manet and the Execution of Maximilian."** Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Brice Marden: A Retrospective of Paintings and Drawings."** Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"Eija-Liisa Ahtila: The Wind."** The Finnish artist presents a video installation in which a woman's apartment is disrupted by gales. Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Projects 83: Monika Sosnowska."** Through Nov. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Lucio Fontana: Venice/New York."** Two bodies of work by the Italian artist (1899-1968) best known for his slashed canvases. Through Jan. 21. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Albers and Moholy-Nagy: From the Bauhaus to the New World."** Through Jan. 21. ♦ **"Picasso and American Art."** Through Jan. 28. ♦ **Mark Grotjahn's** large-scale works in pencil toy with geometry and multiple vanishing points; he ventures into color with a pair of drawings in saturated reds and yellows that anchor the room. Through Jan. 7. ♦ Works by Edward Hopper fill the fifth floor, including "Nighthawks," on loan from the Art Institute of Chicago. Through Dec. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life, 1990-2005."** Through Jan. 21. ♦ **"Tigers of Wrath: Watercolors by Walton Ford."** Through Jan. 28. ♦ **"Ron Mueck."** Through Feb. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Cimabue and Early Italian Devotional Painting."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Domenico Tiepolo (1727-1804): A New Testament."** Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—The rise of comic illustration in the twentieth century is tracked in a wonderful pair of shows, **"Masters of American Comics"** and **"Superheroes: Good and Evil in American Comics."** The first features luminaries like Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, R. Crumb, and Chris Ware at the Jewish Museum, and George Herriman and Charles M. Schulz at the Newark Museum. (The creator of "Maus," Art Spiegelman, withdrew after previous showings in Los Angeles and Milwaukee, in part because the older artists in the exhibition were to be shown in a venue across the Hudson, and in part because of the ethnic emphasis of the Jewish Museum's shows.) "Masters" offers a survey of the genre, with its roots in European avant-garde art and Hollywood movies, while "Superheroes" provides a seminar on the proliferation of characters with special powers during the era of Fascism and the Second World War, including A-list heroes like Superman, Batman, and Captain America, as well as lesser-knowns like Hawkman, the Flame, the Viking Prince, and the Human Torch. Both through Jan. 28. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Fragonard and the French Tradition"** includes only drawings, and without the cotton-candy tints of his paintings teasing the eye it's easier to imagine the rococo master (1732-1806) living through the French Revolution. The show celebrates the centennial of Fragonard's death with an exploration of his revival of the red-chalk technique, linking his works on paper to those of artists he was influenced by, or influenced—including François Boucher, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Jean-Jacques Lagrenée, and Hubert Robert. Despite the sober palette, coquettish maidens and leafy parklands still abound. Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEWARK MUSEUM

49 Washington St., Newark, N.J. (973-596-6550)—**"Masters of American Comics,"** half of a two-part survey of comic art in the twentieth century. (See the Jewish Museum.) Through Jan. 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 12 to 5, and weekends, 10 to 5.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—Watching paint dry is actually kind of interesting. At least it is in **Burt Barr's** hypnotically looped videos, in which two glistening brushstrokes—one red, one blue, both blown up to billboard size—congeal in real time. Two more of the artist's recent videos present alternative summer idylls. In one, a self-portrait meditation shows Barr sitting in a sunny back yard while raindrops seem to dimple a liquid camera lens (actually a mirror set up under a sprinkler). In the other, a pair of turtles copulate with agonizingly slow intensity. Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"John Latham: Time Base and the Universe."** Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"Katrín Sigurdardóttir: High Plane Five."** Through May 7. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

TABLES FOR TWO

BELLAVITAE

24 Minetta Lane (212-473-5121)—Bellavitae, a resolutely authentic trattoria set deep in the dwindling heart of the Village's Italian quarter, is the sort of place that inspires fantasies. Surely those two handsome men, huddled over a scrap of paper at the end of the bar, are plotting a wine-tasting route from Montepulciano to Pienza or debating the finer points of grandmother's *ragù* recipe. Further investigation reveals a receipt from Staples; they're talking about printer paper. But doesn't everything sound romantic in the language of Fellini and opera?

The culinary corollary, and Bellavitae's founding precept, is that things taste better because they're from Italy. And so the menu teems with meticulously sourced native delicacies—Campanese mozzarella di bufala; prosciutto di Parma Langhirano "Gran Riserva" D.O.P.; chestnut honey from Lake Como that Cristiano, the Roman-born manager, says "really takes me back in time"—and the all-*paesano* wine list concentrates on small indigenous vineyards. The vinegar is balsamic, aged twelve years, and the delicious suckling pig is prepared "in the style of the Pianella Fair in Abruzzo." Even the lettuce is flown in from the homeland. "We're not inventing anything here, just presenting the best ingredients," Cristiano said. The restaurant doubles as a commissary, and many of the dry goods are available for purchase, as Cristiano explained, "so that you can give it a shot at home."

In keeping with these gentle aims, the guiding service principle seems to be unobtrusiveness—no accordions here, and amen—though a server, the other night, tried to upsell a viticulturally challenged table, which was a disappointment. If you're looking for company, try the back-room bar, where a sous-chef assembles cold plates with the seriousness of a surgeon while everyone else has a lot of fun watching. At dinnertime recently, a teen-age couple had trouble with eye contact during the crostini course, relaxed over spaghetti *cacio e pepe*, and, by gelato time, were sharing a spoon. (Open daily for dinner. Entrées $14-$25.)

—*Lauren Collins*

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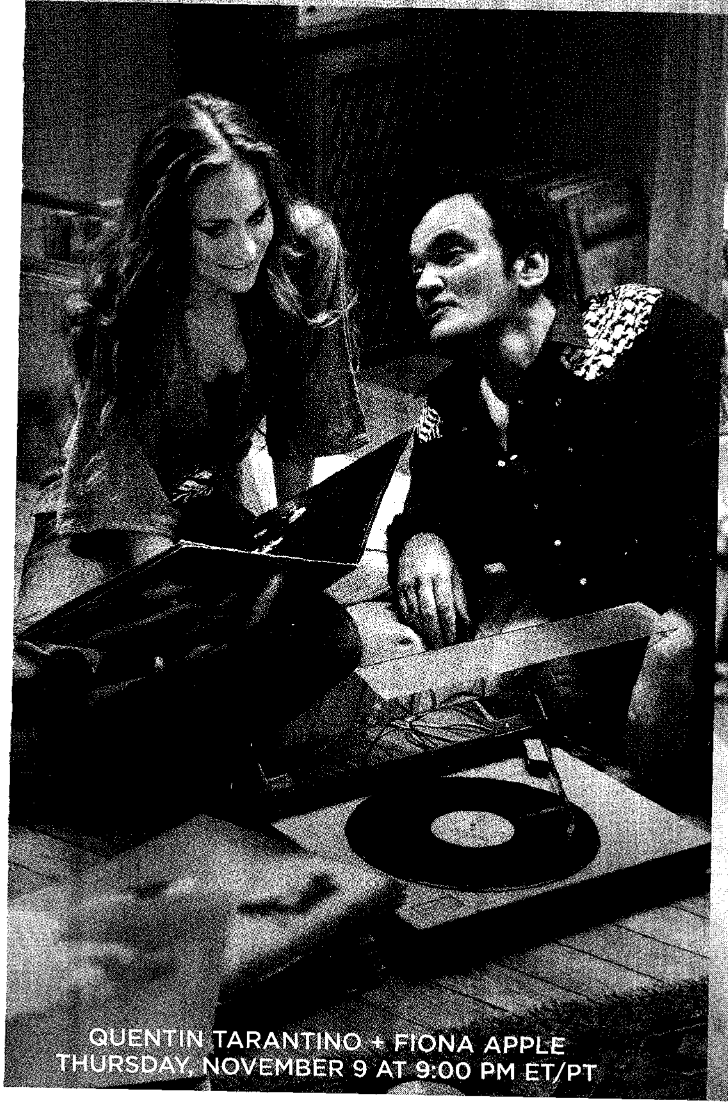

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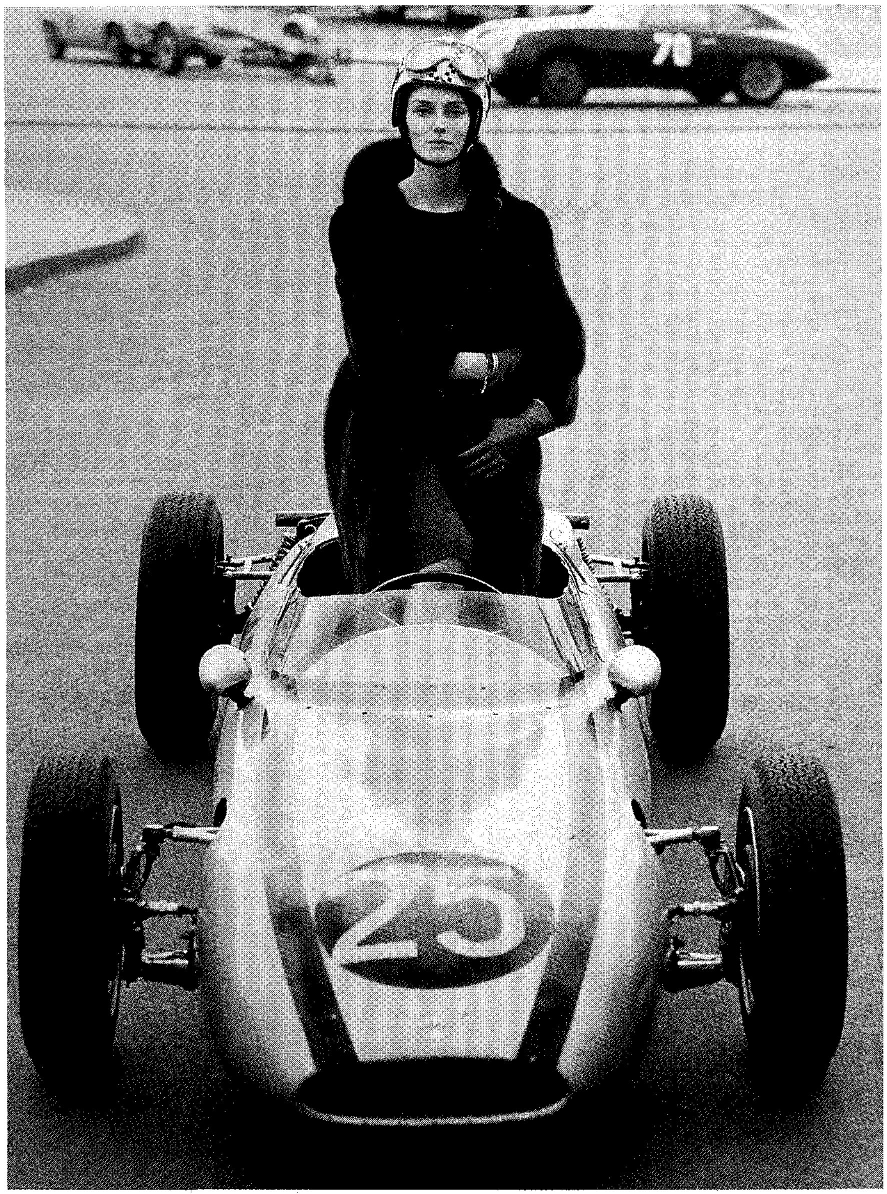


F. C. Gundlach's "Judy Dent in Saga-Nerz auf der Avus, Berlin" (1962), at Cook.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

FRANZ ROH
The small photographs and collages that this critic, historian, and theorist of the German avant-garde made in the nineteen-thirties are fascinatingly uneven. Flashes of exhilarating experimentation, many involving the female nude, eclipse the more pedestrian pictures, but seventy-one pieces stretch Roh's genius a bit thin. Still, he made hauntingly effective use of the negative print for both nudes and landscapes, and his surrealist impulses found their freest rein in collages that combined photos and etchings in dreamlike collisions of mechanical objects and disembodied limbs. Though Max Ernst and Man Ray had more polish, Roh still manages to get under the skin and fester. Through Dec. 22. (Ubu, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444.)

"CITIES IN TRANSITION"
The savvy organizers of this public-art project commissioned new work from Chuck Close, Mitch Epstein, and Dayanita Singh, who were asked to reflect on urban flux in New York, Boston, and Hartford, respectively. Handsomely reproduced and installed around Madison Square Park on artfully suspended billboards, the photographs make few concessions to their context, and many of the smartest ones communicate only obliquely, even with a helpful sign nearby. Only Close, who shows five daguerreotype-based head shots of recent immigrants to New York, really engages the public nature of his art and makes strong, straightforward images that speak to us without captions. Through Nov. 13. (Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St.)

Short List

WALKER EVANS: UBS, 1285 Sixth Ave., at 51st St. 212-713-2885. Through Nov. 17. **F. C. GUNDLACH:** Cook, 1063 Madison Ave., at 80th St. 212-737-3550. Through Dec. 21. **NORBERT SCHWONTKOWSKI:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400. Through Nov. 22. **LISA YUSKAVAGE:** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through Nov. 18.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

NICK CAVE
Cave's body-warping costumes (the artist is not related to the singer) suggest a dreamworld version of the Museum of Natural History. Ethnographic, zoölogical, ceremonial, and carnivalesque elements mingle in head-to-toe outfits; a donkey's face with a sequinned tongue tops one ensemble, another misshapes a leg with lumpy knitted protuberances, and a shaggy yeti's suit is constructed from hundreds of neatly trimmed twigs. The flawlessly crafted outfits would obliterate any wearer's identity, drowning it in a sea of natural and cultural references. Through Nov. 11. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701.)

ROBERT COLESCOTT
These five large paintings, made between 1991 and 1997, are awash in rainbow colors and unsavory scenes. Colescott's funny, harsh pictures get at everything that is most disappointing about America—the taste for violence, the unresolved history of racism, overabundance and waste—but, disturbingly, still entertain. Through Nov. 11. (Kravets Wehby, 521 W. 21st St. 212-352-2238.)

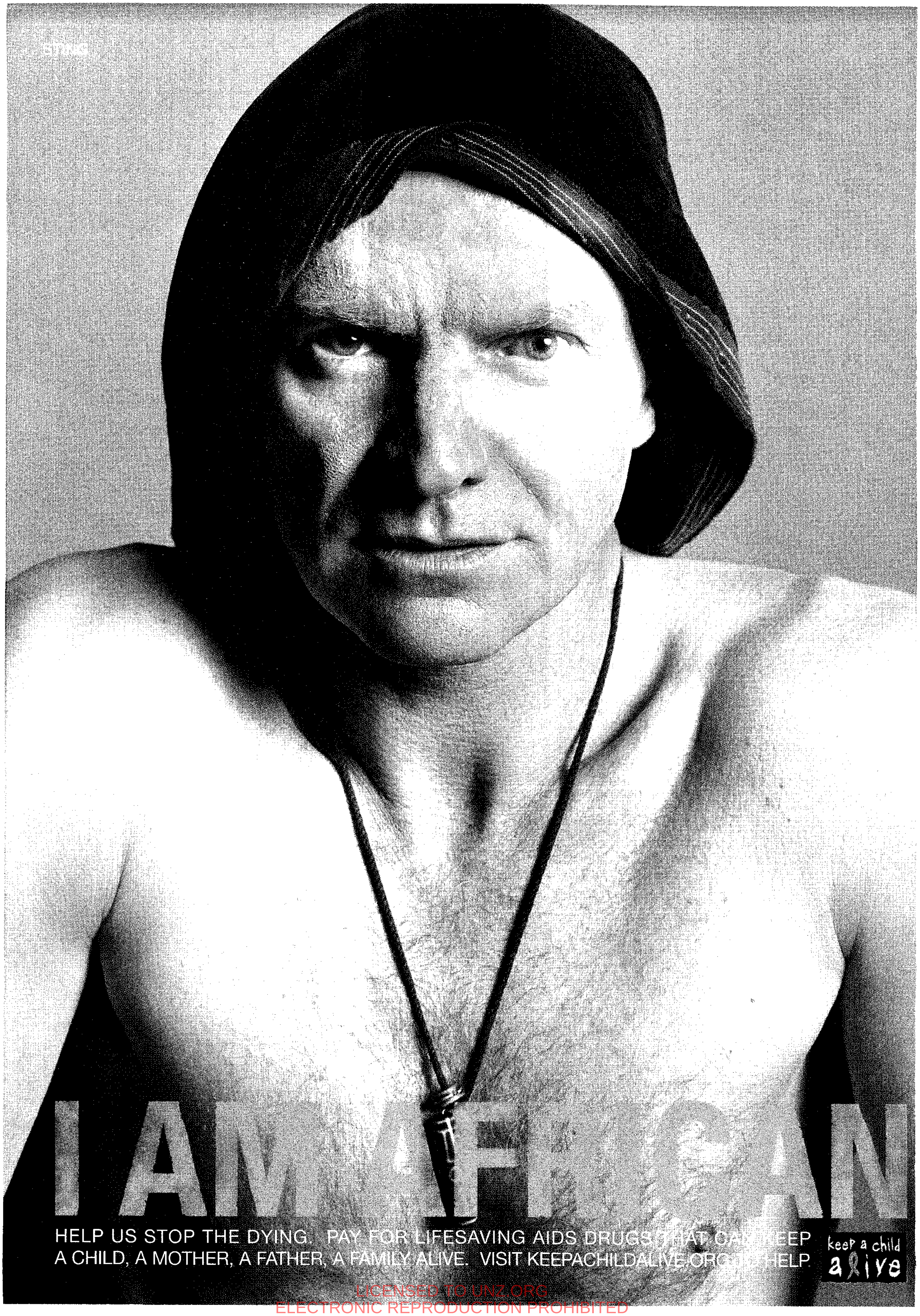
BRYAN HUNT
A trio of tall, narrow sculptures study the way water flows, and eddies, and thickens around an obstacle or a curve. The large-scale pieces are called "Flumes," and, like Hunt's "Airships" series, they toy with volume and weight, the way basic elements—water, air—take up space and can be contained (or not). Unlike the airships, these pieces deal in gravity, harkening back to works based on waterfalls that he made in the seventies. A series of drawings are even knottier; reduced to two dimensions, his studies of flow and ebb have surprising formal similarities to the twisty shapes of old trees. Through Nov. 11. (Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227.)

LEORA LAOR
For her second New York show, this Israeli photographer refines a technique she used in her first, surreptitiously recording people in public and allowing her distance from the action to create a soft, grainy haze over the resulting image. Because several of her subjects are actors onstage or dancers in rehearsal, Laor's artifice is far more apparent this time around. But reducing her cast of characters, often to a solitary figure, helps focus and intensify the drama, and keeps it from dissipating at this larger scale. In a world resigned to isolation, Laor seizes upon the few moments when two people touch, but she doesn't pretend that they're a sign of hope. Through Nov. 22. (Meislin, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-2552.)

KALUP LINZY
This is Linzy's first solo outing, but he is already known, thanks to a few group-show cameos, for low-tech videos that mix melodrama, minstrelsy, sexual politics, and wicked humor, in more or less equal doses. This duet of videos from the ongoing "Conversations wit de Churen" series finds the artist donning a ridiculous blond wig and assuming the role of Katonya, an aspiring artist who "conversates" with friends, lovers, employers, and God—then emotes with soap-opera abandon while Minnie Riperton's "Memory Lane" blares in the background. A series of gouaches by Katonya/Linzy make a bit more sense after one has witnessed the artist's performative antics. Through Nov. 11. (Taxter & Spengemann, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-924-0212.)

MARISA MERZ
The Arte Povera artist (and the wife of Mario Merz) shows a small suite of new work, concentrating on pencil-and-gold-leaf drawings on wood panels. One piece has a small, fractured clay hand affixed to it; another is built into a larger assemblage of wood blocks and blank white paper. The recurrent motif is a wide-eyed, full-lipped, functionally noseless female entity, part Byzantine icon, part alien, who hovers on the surface of the paper enmeshed in delicate nets of graphite lines. Through Nov. 11. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

ELIZABETH MURRAY
Manically happy but totally controlled, Murray's recent paintings (dating from 2002 through 2006) put Pop Art quotations on shuffle, then transfer the smashed-up code back into handmade, auteurist terms. A fist, a foot, an amoebic cloud, an arrow, and a utensil like a spork zing and splat across the bright, shaped canvases. Murray's gestural touch is even more palpable in a series of small collages in gouache, ink, and watercolor, where quick marks on cut and twisted paper bring busy energy into visible form without monumentalizing it. Through Nov. 11. (PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)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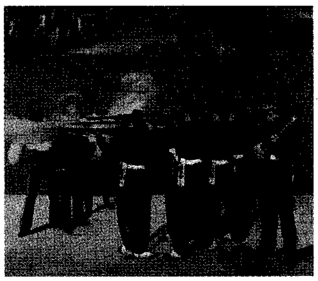
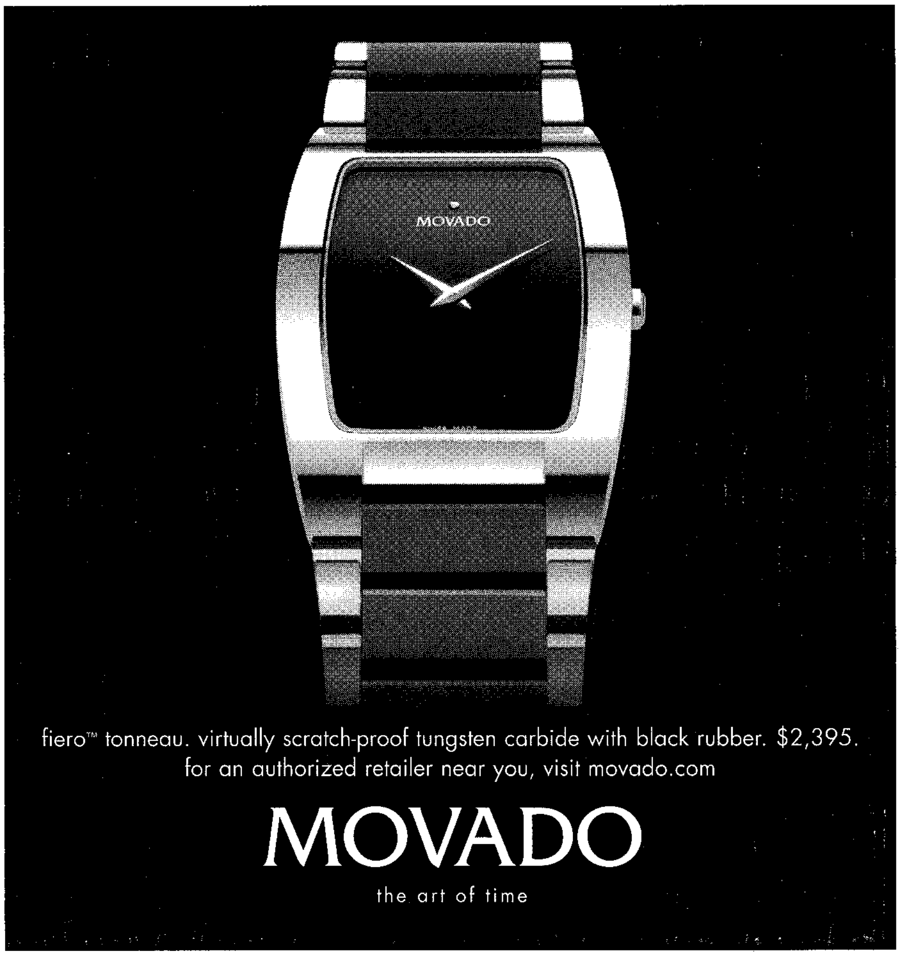
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BRILLIANT EXECUTION

Édouard Manet's four paintings and a lithograph about the death by firing squad, in 1867, of a French-installed Emperor of Mexico are great illustrational and political art. In both respects, "Manet and the Execution of Maximilian," at MOMA, couldn't be timelier. Storytelling has resurged in painting today, and the drama of a botched regime change stings. Maximilian, a liberal Austrian archduke, stayed to fight when France abandoned him. He was shot beside his two Mexican generals. Manet pictured the split second of a fusillade: soldiers firing at victims who, inches away, still stand. Concerned with essential fact, not realism, Manet played freely with details. Eloquent staging and color intensify a mood at once of chilled detachment and of helpless horror. The angry artist knew whom to blame. (In the latter images, the Mexican soldiers look French.) But his reverie attains the last-ditch redemption of minds, and even nations, in despair: tragedy. A wealth of related material in the show includes Manet's masterpieces "The Dead Christ and the Angels" and "The Dead Toreador."

—*Peter Schjeldahl*



ÉDOUARD MANET, "THE EXECUTION OF EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN" (1868-69)



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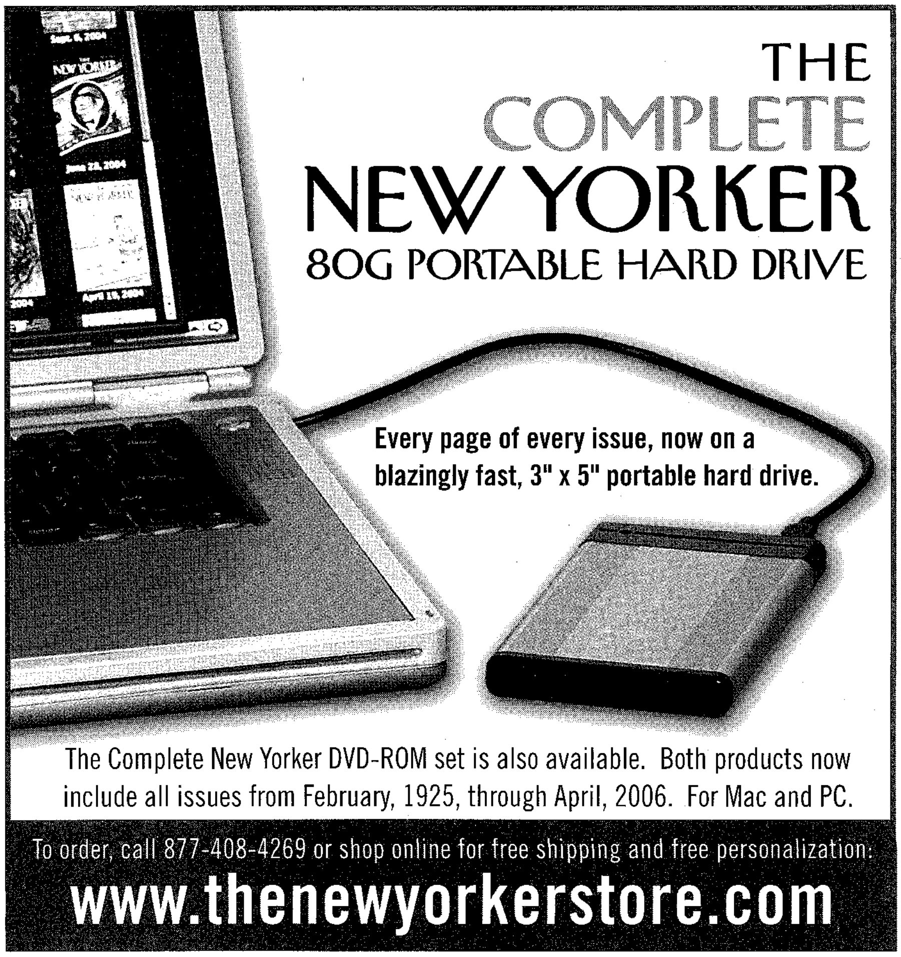

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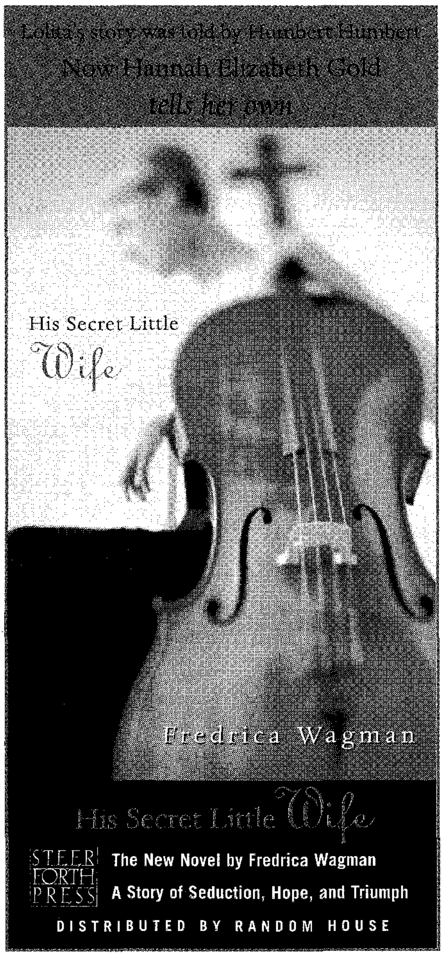

Lolita's story was told by Humbert Humbert
Now Hannah Elizabeth Gold
tells her own

His Secret Little
Wife

Fredrica Wagman

His Secret Little Wife

STEERFORTH PRESS
The New Novel by Fredrica Wagman
A Story of Seduction, Hope, and Triumph

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JULIA SCHMIDT
This fresh dispatch from the Leipzig painters' league veers from the figurative, Pop-communist propaganda formula, heading toward something more in the vein of Gerhard Richter or his most accomplished heir, Luc Tuymans. Like Tuymans, Schmidt makes paintings that are matte and muted, as if bleached by the sun. She also shares the Richter-Tuymans obsession with the relationship between photography and painting. The difference is that her subjects are bland and self-effacing rather than historically and politically freighted. Bits of fabric, corners of furniture, and the spaces in between objects serve as impetuses for paintings that are vague and dreamlike, but still steeped in the compositional formalism which distinguishes most Leipzig-based painters. Through Nov. 11. (Kaplan, 525 W. 21st St. 212-645-7335.)

FRED TOMASELLI
Tomaselli's decorative "paintings"—découpage panels in which cutout photos, flowers, leaves, and pills are encased in layers of resin—have always shimmied between the realms of art and high-end craft. The pivotal element is the embedded drugs, which give his otherwise tame compositions a whiff of counterculture danger. (How many artists can boast that their paintings were detained by French customs agents?) A few works depicting birds perched on tree branches replicate the loveliness of Renaissance tapestries; others recall Wangechi Mutu's photomontage distortions. But while Tomaselli's swirling concoctions of hands, eyes, lips, and faces arranged in psychedelic vortices are impeccably crafted, they often feel like stock portraits of people on drugs—silly, dated representations in the "Reefer Madness" vein. Through Nov. 11. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

Short List

ARTURO HERRERA: Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Through Nov. 25. **CORINNE MERCADIER:** Klotz, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764. Through Nov. 18. **JOE SOLA:** Bespoke, 547 W. 27th St. 212-695-8201. Through Nov. 14. **LISA YUSKAVAGE:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Nov. 18. **"DICE THROWN (WILL NEVER ANNUL CHANCE)":** Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 19th St. 212-929-5959. Through Nov. 11.

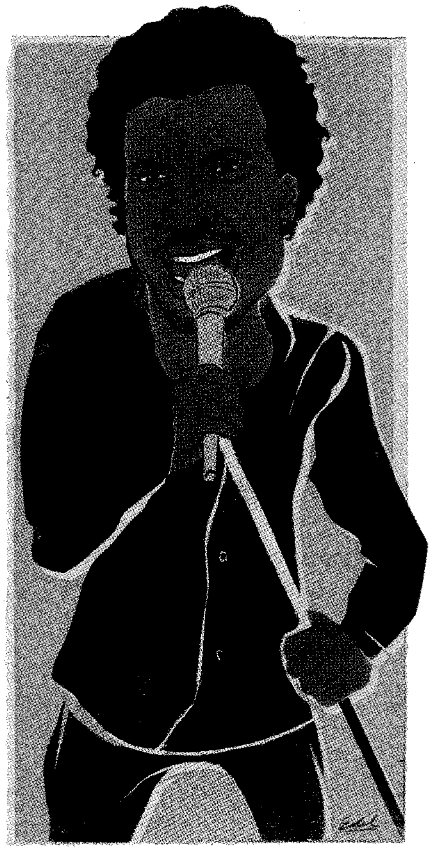
DANCE

BALLET HISPANICO
In its final week at the Joyce, the stylish company performs the Catalan choreographer Ramón Oller's brand-new "Corazón al-Andaluz" (inspired by Washington Irving's "Tales of the Alhambra") in rotation with Willie Rosario's "Palladium Suite." Four different mix-and-match bills are filled out with a generous helping of old favorites, including Ann Reinking's jazzy "Ritmo y Ruido" and handpicked excerpts from works by Oller, Graciela Daniele, the renowned Cuban choreographer Alberto Alonso, the Brazilian-born Alexandre Magno, and the late Venezuelan dancemaker Vicente Nebrada. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Nov. 7-8 at 7:30, Nov. 9-10 at 8, Nov. 11 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 12 at 2 and 7:30.)

ROSEANNE SPRADLIN DANCE
In Spradlin's disturbing "Survive Cycle," the dancers push each other to the ground, over and over, and the desperate intensity of their discontent swells. Theirs is a collapsing world, and they cut at each other's clothing until the outfits break down into swatches of color. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 7-11 at 7:30.)

KEIGWIN + COMPANY
In Larry Keigwin's evening of "Portraits," solo character sketches alternate with knotty love affairs. One duet starts with a girl who won't let go of a guy and ends with the guy attaching himself to the girl. In another, a tentative couple plays footsie. As in Keigwin's cabarets, the dominant mood is playful. The music ranges from pop (Annie Lennox, Neil Diamond, Nina Simone, and others) to Satie and Saint-Saëns. Lip-synching or even singing along, Keigwin and his dancers don't condescend to the material; they're having too good a time. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. Nov. 9-11 at 8 and Nov. 12 at 3.)

LUCIANA ACHUGAR
The Uruguayan-born choreographer Achugar, based in New York for the past decade, presents her first evening-length work. "Exhausting Love at Danspace Project," for five dancers, features old-fashioned blue factory uniforms, suggesting the hard physical labor of dance. Deriving her inspiration from the setting—St. Mark's Church—Achugar explores the overlap between rituals of performance and of religious ceremony. (Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 9-12 at 8:30.)



Lionel Richie, at the Beacon Theatre.

PETER KYLE DANCE
The former Nikolais/Louis dancer Peter Kyle introduces his own company to New York at a fitting locale: Henry Street Settlement, his mentors' longtime artistic home. The multidisciplinary program includes a lobby video installation, two new works performed by a band of dancers and actors, and Kyle dancing "Frail Demons," a haunting solo created by Murray Louis in 1984. (466 Grand St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 10-11 at 7:30 and Nov. 12 at 3.)

DEEPLY ROOTED DANCE THEATRE
In its home town of Chicago, Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre is spoken of as the city's answer to the Alvin Ailey troupe. Both companies feature extraordinary, fiercely committed dancers, and both companies feature repertory that sometimes resorts to cliché in attempts to inspire. This one-night-only program ranges from dances to Bach, Dvořák, and the Brazilian composer Camargo Guarnieri to an agitprop piece about AIDS victims and an exuberant hip-hop-meets-modern finale. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, John Jay College, 899 Tenth Ave. 866-468-7619. Nov. 10 at 8.)

PABLO ASLAN'S AVANTANGO
In what's turning out to be a tango weekend (see "Tango Fire"), Avantango counts as the local favorite—a group composed mostly of Argentinean dancers and musicians who live in New York. Aslan, a forward-thinking bassist and composer, inflects his tango with an approach and instru-

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

mentation borrowed from jazz, and the dancers, mostly Broadway veterans, ride the modern sounds with aplomb. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-922-8484. Nov. 11 at 8.)

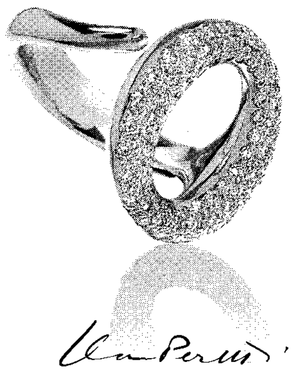
MIRO MAGLOIRE
The young choreographer takes a pared-down approach to dance performance with his company, New Chamber Ballet: no theatrical lights, no wings, no "soundscapes" or high-minded concepts, just limpid, unironic, classically based dance (on pointe), set to lovingly selected chamber or solo music (played live), performed in an intimate space where the audience can see the dancers' every move. This time around, his five dancers will present two new works, one by Magloire, set to Schubert, and the other by Ian Spencer Bell, set to William Bolcom rags, as well as a piece set to Scriabin études and a Mozart tribute from last year. (City Center, Studio 4, 130 W. 56th St. 212-868-4444. Nov. 11 at 8.)

"TANGO FIRE"
Estampa Porteñas, an ensemble from Buenos Aires led by the Argentinean former ballerina Carolina Soler, has taken this tango revue around the world. Five couples, a singer, and a tight quartet of musicians take turns in a program divided between a casual, dance-hall aesthetic (as if in a *milonga*, a tango party) and a stagier second half. Both the music and the choreography move from traditional to contemporary, dragging out warhorses like "La Cumparsita" and finishing up with Astor Piazzolla songs and big lifts. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-4100. Nov. 12 at 2 and 7.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
In a trio of sixtieth-anniversary programs at the Joyce, this generation's Limón dancers are guided by former pupils of the Master. The artistic director, Carla Maxwell, a forty-year company veteran, mounts Limón masterworks like "The Moor's Pavane" and "A Choreographic Offering," while Sarah Stackhouse, a Limón principal from the sixties, stages a revival of Doris Humphrey's "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías," an early work not performed by the company in forty years. The episodic "Recordare" (2005), having its New York première, is a tribute to Limón's Mexican roots by his former Juilliard student Lar Lubovitch, set at a Día de los Muertos festival. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Nov. 14-15 at 7:30. Through Nov. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Anthony Minghella's unmissable production of **"Madama Butterfly"** is awesome, deliberate, and artfully romantic—no surprise to fans of his films. With Cristina Gallardo-Domâs and Marcello Giordani; Asher Fisch conducts. (Nov. 8 and Nov. 11 at 8.) ♦ The début of the twenty-eight-year-old Joseph Calleja, in a revival of the Otto Schenk production of **"Rigoletto,"** must count as one of the more interesting in the Met's history. The Maltese tenor (in the role of the Duke) possesses a voice of extraordinary sweetness and warmth, as well as considerable personal charm—factors that almost completely disguise a somewhat wayward sense of rhythm and a not-quite-complete technique. The veteran baritone Juan Pons, in the title role, and the conductor, Friedrich Haider, another débutante, are models of rock-solid professionalism. (Nov. 9 at 7:30.) ♦ Juan Diego Flórez, the most glamorous Rossini tenor before the public, returns to the house to sing the role of Almaviva in **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** in a heavily promoted new production by the Broadway director Bartlett Sher ("The Light in the Piazza"). His formidable colleagues include Diana Damrau (Rosina) and Peter Mattei (Figaro); Maurizio Benini. (Nov. 10 at 8 and Nov. 13 at 7:30.) ♦ The gloriously archaic Zeffirelli production of **"Tosca,"** featuring the powerhouse cast of Andrea Gruber, José Cura, and James Morris; Nicola Luisotti. (Nov. 11 at 1:30.) ♦ With Vincenzo La Scola replacing Cura. (Nov. 14 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)



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NEW YORK CITY OPERA
A new cast, featuring Georgia Jarman, Leonardo Capalbo, and Michael Chioldi in the leading roles, performs in the new Jonathan Miller production of **"L'Elisir d'Amore,"** set in the American Southwest; Gerald Steichen conducts. (Nov. 8 at 7:30 and Nov. 10 at 8.) ♦ Maestro Julius Rudel's return to City Opera's podium, after two and a half decades away, is not quite the triumph it could have been, but the singers soldier through Tim Albery's production of **"Così Fan Tutte,"** offering a persuasive reading of this perpetual puzzle of an opera. The fine cast features standout performances from, among others, Sandra Piques Eddy (Dorabella), the baritone Kyle Pfortmiller (Guglielmo), and the dependable James Maddalena (Don Alfonso). (Nov. 9 at 7:30.) ♦ James Robinson's English-language production of **"Hansel and Gretel"** sets Humperdinck's quasi-Wagnerian treatment of the grim Brothers Grimm tale in a Victorian-era New York. A number of winning young voices—including those of Jennifer Aylmer, Jennifer Rivera, Julianna Di Giacomo, and Jennifer Roderer—are featured in the rotating cast; Steven Mosteller. (Nov. 11-12 at 1:30 and Nov. 12 at 5:30.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Vanessa Cariddi (in the title role), Kerri Marcinko, Scott Piper, and Daesan No; Gary Thor Wedow. (Nov. 11 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

TEATRO GRATTACIELO: "LA FARSA AMOROSA"
This once-a-year company, which revives forgotten works by the little masters of the verismo school, turns to Riccardo Zandonai; best known for the stormy "Francesca da Rimini," he strikes a comic tone in this later work, with a libretto based on the same story that Falla used for "The Three-Cornered Hat." Todd Geer, Monica Yunus, and Peter Castaldi lead the cast; David Wroe. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 11 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

OLGA KERN
The Van Cliburn Competition-winning pianist, an authentic voice in the grand Russian style, scales down her Carnegie Hall-size sound for a concert at the Yamaha Piano Salon, which features two of the great C-Minor piano concertos—Beethoven's Third and Shostakovich's First. Vladimir Kern (the pianist's brother) conducts a chamber-orchestra accompaniment. (Yamaha Artist Services, Fifth Ave. at 54th St. 212-339-9995, ext. 227. Nov. 8 at 7:30.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
James Levine brings his love of opera with him to Carnegie Hall, leading a program (which concludes with Brahms's First Symphony) featuring a concert performance of Bartók's one-act opera, **"Bluebeard's Castle"**; Anne Sofie von Otter and Albert Dohmen, a formidable pair, sing it. (212-247-7800. Nov. 11 at 8.)

ST. THOMAS CHOIR
The renowned men-and-boys choir of the city's most extravagant Episcopal church marks the end of the Mozart year, offering performances of the "Coronation" Mass and the "Vesperae Solennes de Confessore." John Scott conducts, with accompaniment by Concert Royal. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Nov. 14 at 7:30. For tickets, visit www.saintthomaschurch.org.)

RECITALS

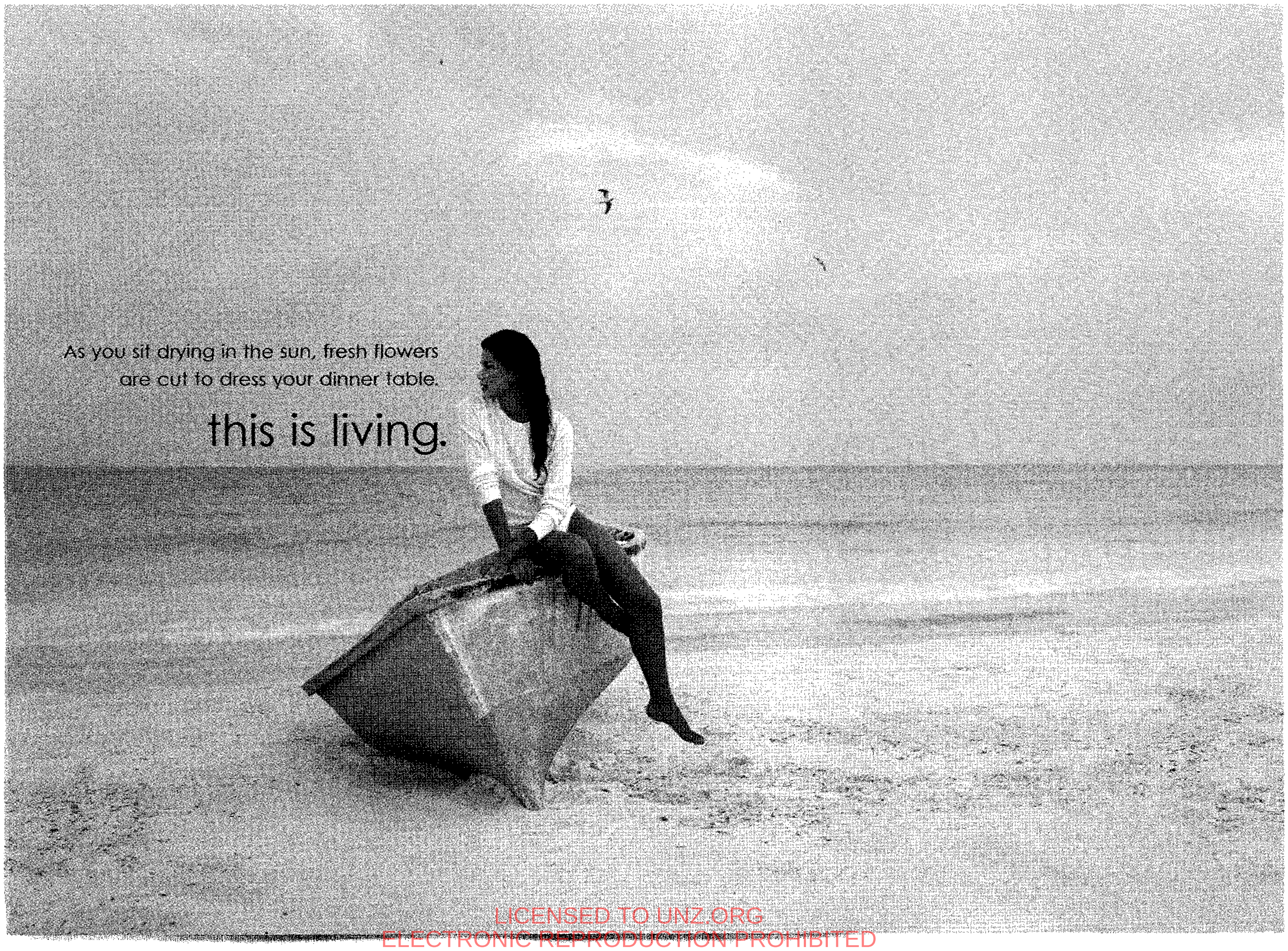
"KEYS TO THE FUTURE"
The ambitious festival of contemporary piano music, under the command of Joseph Rubenstein, returns for a second year with three contiguous concerts. In the first, Rubenstein and two other acclaimed artists, Blair McMillen and Lisa Moore, offer music new and old by Ornstein, Dutilleux, Fred Hersch ("Twenty-Four Variations on a Bach Chorale"), and the British iconoclast Howard Skempton. (Greenwich House, 46 Barrow St. 212-242-4770. Nov. 7-9 at 8. For details, see www.keystothefuture.org.)

TIMOTHY FAIN
The Rossetti String Quartet's charismatic young first violinist offers a recital at the Kosciuszko Foundation, performing music by Mendelssohn, Chausson (the "Poème"), Mozart, and Randall Woolf (a world première). (15 E. 65th St. 212-279-4200. Nov. 8 at 7:30.)

HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD
Raising wolves and making recordings are not the only preoccupations of this popular artist; she also gives concerts. Her Carnegie Hall recital début includes works by Bach, Chopin, Brahms (the Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79), and Rachmaninoff (the imposing Sonata No. 2 in B-Flat Minor). (212-247-7800. Nov. 8 at 8.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET
Two years after its founding, a brash young American group made its mark by being the first in the U.S. to perform all of Bartók's quartets as a cycle. That was the Juilliard, which marks its diamond anniversary by playing them in a pair of concerts this week. Nov. 8 at 8: Quartets Nos. 1, 3, and 5. ♦ Nov. 10 at 8: Quartets Nos. 2, 4, and 6. (Alice Tully Hall. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

"COMPOSER PORTRAIT: JULIUS HEMPHILL"
Ursula Oppens, a superlative pianist (and a close friend of Hemphill's), joins with such musicians as the string quartet Ethel and the Julius Hemphill Sextet to pay tribute to the late jazz-classical titan


As you sit drying in the sun, fresh flowers
are cut to dress your dinner table.
this is living.

in a program that features “One Atmosphere,” “Mingus Gold,” and other works. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Nov. 9 at 8.)

"YOUNG SINGERS AND SHOSTAKOVICH"
In three concerts, Larissa Gergieva, the renowned St. Petersburg pianist and coach, accompanies a clutch of fine young singers (including the Met mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Semenchuk) in a broad selection of Shostakovich's music for voices and piano; the first features a classic work, “From Jewish Folk Poetry.” (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. Nov. 10-12 at 7:30. For details, see www.carnegiehall.org.)

MITSUKO UCHIDA AND THE BRENTANO STRING QUARTET
Some devoted and distinguished colleagues gather to perform music by Mozart (the Piano Quartet in G Minor), Bartók, and Schumann (the Piano Quintet) in the friendly confines of Zankel Hall. (212-247-7800. Nov. 11 at 7:30.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: ENSEMBLE EUROPÉEN WILLIAM BYRD
The series, based at Corpus Christi Church, presents the New York début of this early-music group (five singers from Paris and their New Zealand-born organist and conductor), who offer “The Path to Paradise,” a selection of motets by Charpentier and several of his contemporaries. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Nov. 12 at 4.)

"THE MOVADO HOUR"
The stylish series of one-hour concerts, curated by Pedja Muzijevic and held at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, makes an auspicious return with a program offered by the violinist Gidon Kremer, with friends, performing music by Bach, Bartók, Piazzolla, and Arvo Pärt. Refreshments are served before the concert. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. Nov. 12 at 6. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 212-218-7540.)

MOVIES OPENING

CAVE OF THE YELLOW DOG
A drama about a family of nomads in Mongolia. Directed by Byambasuren Davaa. In Mongolian. Opening Nov. 10. (Angelika Film Center.)

COME EARLY MORNING
Joey Lauren Adams directed this drama, about a troubled Southern woman (Ashley Judd) in search of love. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

COPYING BEETHOVEN
In this drama, directed by Agnieszka Holland, a young composer (Diane Kruger) tries to get Beethoven (Ed Harris) to become her teacher. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

FUCK
A documentary about the four-letter word, directed by Steve Anderson. Opening Nov. 10. (Quad Cinema.)

FUR
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

A GOOD YEAR
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

HARSH TIMES
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 8. (Film Forum.)

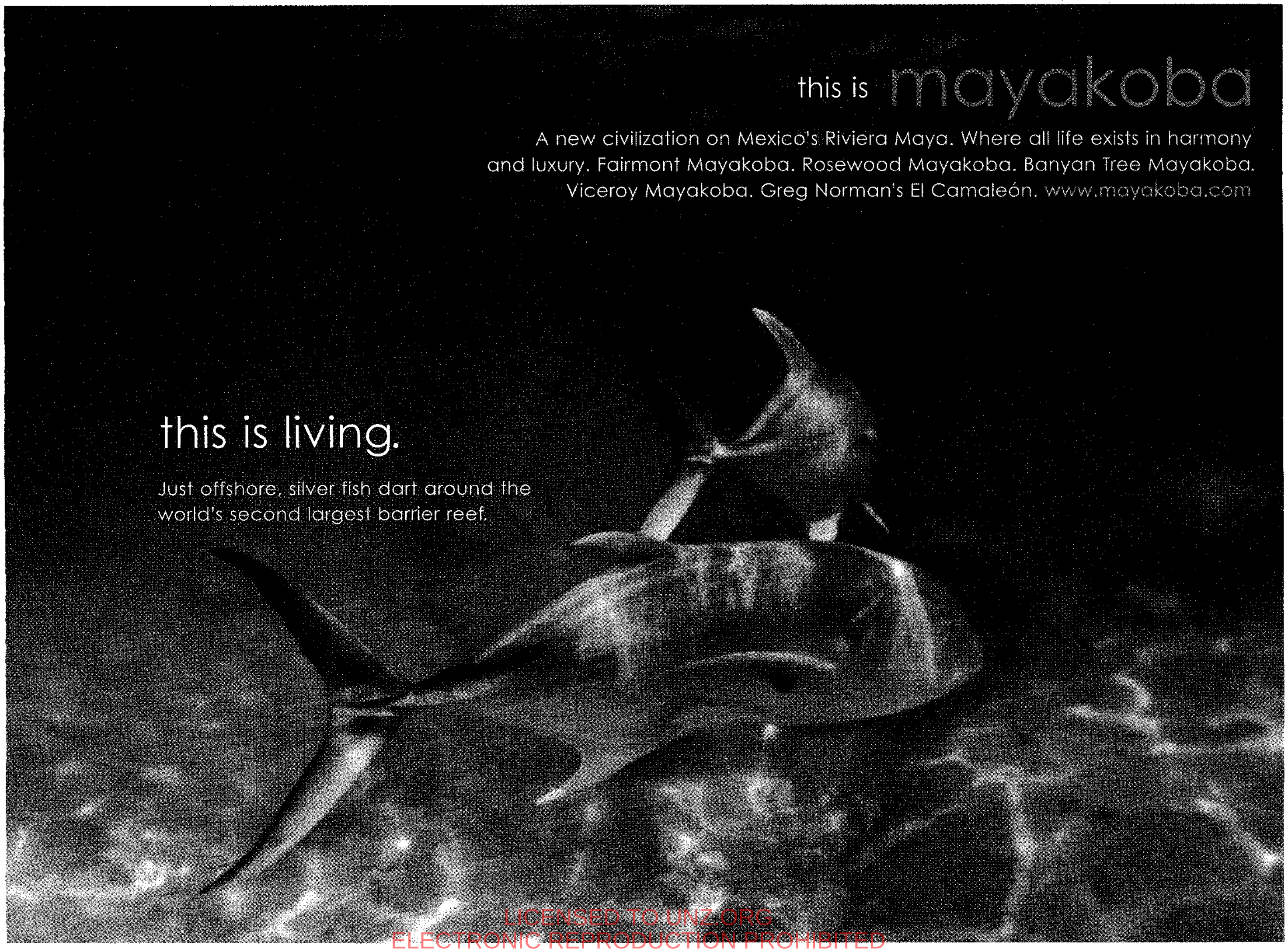
THE MAGIC GLOVES
A comedy, directed by Martín Rejtman, about a Buenos Aires taxi-driver who unexpectedly comes up in the world. Opening Nov. 8. (IFC Center.)

THE RETURN
A horror film about a young woman (Sarah Michelle Gellar) who has visions of an unsolved murder. Directed by Asif Kapadia; co-starring Sam Shepard. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

STRANGER THAN FICTION
Marc Forster directed this comedy, about a civil servant (Will Ferrell) who finds that he has become a character in the imagination of a novelist (Emma Thompson). Co-starring Maggie Gyllenhaal and Dustin Hoffman. Opening Nov. 10. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

AMERICAN DREAM
Barbara Kopple's account of a meat cutters' strike in Austin, Minnesota, is superbly lucid and dramatic. Blessedly free of grandstanding or condescending prankishness, it's a moving, edgy portrait of the dislocations caused by corporate greed as well as confused goals in the ranks of labor. When the Hormel company proposed a pay cut for its laborers in the mid-eighties, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union refused to give in. Defying their national leadership's policy of accepting concessions, the Austin meat cutters enlisted the freelance labor strategist Ray Rogers. He orchestrated media events to win free publicity, betting that a public outcry would embarrass Hormel as well as the businesses connected to it. Rogers comes off as a carpetbagger who nonetheless inspires the Local. Kopple draws multidimensional portraits of labor leaders and representative workers (from diehards to scabs), and also fills you in on the how-tos of negotiating. In an age when first-person peregrinations and “at-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THIS WEEK

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Audio: Alex Ross listens to Steve Reich and others.

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mosphere" often frustrate a viewer's need to know, Kopple reminds us that documentaries can be mind-openers. Released in 1990.—*Michael Sragow* (IFC Center; Nov. 14.)

BABEL

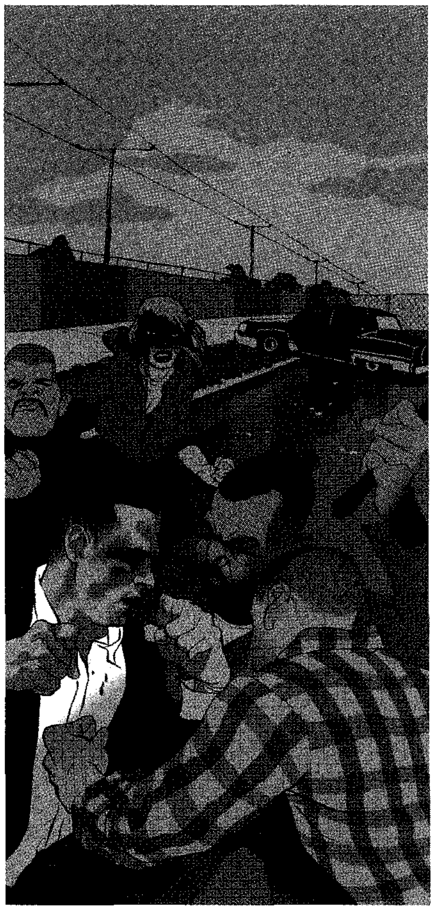
Alejandro González Iñárritu creates savagely beautiful and heartbreaking images, he gets fearless performances out of his actors, he edits with the sharpest razor inside any computer in Hollywood, and he also abuses his audience with a humorless fatalism and a piling up of calamities that border on the ludicrous. "Babel" is set in Morocco, Tokyo, and both Southern California and northern Mexico. The movie has three stories—all touching on relationships between parents and children—which have been arbitrarily linked together by the will of the director and his collaborator, the screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga. Their theme is the pathos of ignorance. All over the world, terrible things are happening, and we cannot know them or feel them, but an eagle-eyed artist, as he spans the globe, can connect us. As a mood, this globalized empathy is a noble enterprise. As a method of constructing a movie, it's hopeless. With Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett as a couple that gets in trouble in Morocco, Adriana Barraza as their housekeeper and nanny back home with the kids in San Diego, and Rinko Kikuchi as a teen-age girl in Tokyo desperate for the embrace of a man. In French, English, Spanish, Japanese, Berber, and Arabic.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/30/06.) (In wide release.)

BORAT

Somewhere inside the sound and fury that have shrouded this project is a short, gross, and very funny series of sketches, lightly knotted together into a modern picaresque. Sacha Baron Cohen, the British performer behind Ali G, brings his yet-more-notorious invention, the Kazakh journalist Borat Sagdiyev, to the United States, where his shameless curiosity, not to mention a reckless indifference to political correctness, is designed to cause maximum offense. The plot, if you can call it that, demands that Borat travel across the country to find Pamela Anderson: a noble quest, even if it does mean putting that distinguished actress in a sack. Some of the time, our hero is accompanied by his manager, Azamat (Ken Davitian), and also by a live bear, although Azamat looks more like a bear than the bear does. There are jokes thrown at Jews, African-Americans, rodeo fans, homosexuals, and, for good measure, the rest of the population. The smart explanation for this is that Baron Cohen, who is Jewish himself, is assaulting intolerance wherever he finds it; what he cannot control is the fate of the film itself, and one wonders whether, to a late-night college audience, say, the irony behind Borat would be of much concern. Could the movie become a safety valve, encouraging its fans to let off steam?—*Anthony Lane* (11/6/06) (In wide release.)

THE DEPARTED

This merrily vicious and violent Martin Scorsese film about cops and gangsters in Boston will never haunt your sleep, as "Taxi Driver" and "Raging Bull" do, but it will keep you excited and amused for well over two hours. A South Boston mobster (Jack Nicholson) recruits a young neighborhood kid and later places him, as a grownup (played by Matt Damon), in the Massachusetts State Police; the police, in turn, place their own undercover guy (Leonardo DiCaprio) in the crime boss's outfit. It's a double-mole story in which the two moles, in the end, wind up hunting each other. "The Departed" is a remake of the Hong Kong thriller "Infernal Affairs," directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, and it has the speed and volatility of a Hong Kong movie. But Scorsese and the screenwriter, William Monahan, have added weight to the story by digging deep into urban tribal lore—the memories of loyalty and betrayal going back decades, the nasty old jokes, the bullying insults and invective. Nicholson doesn't seem to take the movie very seriously—he has a ball singing Irish ditties and making rat faces and holding up severed hands—but everyone else is both disciplined and highly adept at delivering the foulmouthed idiom. With Martin Sheen, Mark Wahlberg, and Alec Baldwin as cops, and Vera Farmiga as a police psychiatrist who is attracted to both young men.—*D.D.* (10/16/06) (In wide release.)



Christian Bale stars in "Harsh Times."

TOMER HANUKA

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

Clint Eastwood's ironic epic about the battle of Iwo Jima and its strange aftermath has a fine, sensitive temperament but lacks an emotional payoff. Of the six men who raised the flag on Mt. Suribachi, and who became the anonymous subjects of the most famous photograph of the war, three survived the battle to be called home and paraded around the country as salesmen-heroes in a national War Bond tour. Obsessed with their dead friends, these ordinary guys—John Bradley (Ryan Phillippe), Rene Gagnon (Jesse Bradford), and Ira Hayes (Adam Beach)—faced their public role with varying degrees of pride, nausea, and guilt. The movie has been framed as a search for the truth, yet there is nothing startling, and little that is hidden, to expose. The men were embarrassed by the public fawning over them as heroes, but they also raised a lot of money at a crucial time in the war. The movie is most impressive in its sombre battle scenes, which were mostly shot on a desolate strip of Iceland where the black sand has the same grim look as Iwo Jima's mangled turf. Eastwood and the cinematographer, Tom Stern, drained all the color out of the shots except for the thick, red stains of blood.—*D.D.* (10/30/06) (In wide release.)

HARSH TIMES

In David Ayer's intense, volatile drama, Christian Bale is flamboyantly virtuosic as Jim Davis, a recently discharged soldier who is home again in L.A. after a long and rough tour of duty in Afghanistan, which left him hyped on (and haunted by) the high-tech killing. But Davis is also the tenderhearted fiancé of a young Mexican woman whom he visits across the border. The two sides of the character's personality don't really mesh, but unity of character is hardly Ayer's point. Watching Jim spiral downward through the underworld of drug dealers while dragging his friend Mike (Freddy Rodríguez) into more trouble than he bargained for is like being kicked in the head for two hours, though in the most positive sense. Ayer builds the film around shocking and realistic violence, which he never romanticizes. In dramatizing the human price of warfare—and of the drug wars at home and its hypocrisies—Ayer takes a street-smart view of class-based anxieties: his characters are one break away from a toehold on respectability, from jail, or from death. Eva Longoria co-stars as Mike's long-suffering wife; Tammy Trull is touching as Marta, Jim's fiancée.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

INFAMOUS

Douglas McGrath's film follows much the same path that was taken by last year's "Capote." Each one is not just about Truman Capote but, more specifically, about the murders in Kansas that led him to write "In Cold Blood" and, in so doing, to breach the border between fiction and reporting. The new movie is more acute on the temptations offered by that process; we see Capote (Toby Jones) writing down different versions of what an interviewee said, to see which sounds the smoothest. Jones is the living image of Capote, catching his fluting tones and the small man's Napoleonic need to fill a room. McGrath tracks him from a gold-lit, gossiping New York to the bloodstains of the Clutter household; and so to the gallows, and then back to New York, which suddenly, to Capote and to us, seems like far less fun. (Hence the crooning, sad-sweet cameo from Gwyneth Paltrow, as a New York City cabaret singer, that runs over the opening credits.) With Sandra Bullock as Nelle Harper Lee, Jeff Daniels as the detective, Daniel Craig as one of the killers, and, scariest of all, Juliet Stevenson as Diana Vreeland.—*A.L.* (10/23/06) (In wide release.)

IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS

The first documentary about the war in Iraq to be made by a real filmmaker. James Longley gives us three powerful portraits—an orphaned boy in Baghdad whose domineering employer, an ignorant garage owner, has become his guardian; a group of Moqtada al-Sadr's followers preparing for regional elections with passionate anti-American speeches and an iron fist; a family of Kurds enjoying greater freedom after the American operation. Longley has a gift for intimacy and an eye for vagrant touches of beauty everywhere—in the faces of children, the façades of mosques illuminated at night as blissful flagellants pass before them. Even a black curl of bomb smoke becomes an entrancing pattern. The color is ravishing, the implications tragic: this is a broken society, and America cannot understand it, much less mend it. In Kurdish, Arabic, and English.—*D.D.* (Film Forum.)

LITTLE CHILDREN

A disappointed young mother (Kate Winslet) who has given up graduate school for a lousy marriage in the suburbs starts an affair with a former golden-boy college jock (Patrick Wilson), who is also married but stranded in adulthood. There's an element of garden-variety suspense in Todd Field's new movie, which he adapted with Tom Perrotta from Perrotta's novel—will the lovers run away together? But the movie is about a lot more. In a community devoted to the protection of children, a convicted sex offender (Jackie Earle Haley) shows up. The consternation he creates is so extreme that it seems the filmmakers might be suggesting a metaphor for the indeterminate but all-encompassing threat of terrorism; at the least, they are suggesting that both men and women are transferring their sexual frustrations and fears onto a pervert. The filmmakers' tone veers between a slightly mischievous irony and the most generous sympathy. The sex scenes are brief, naked, heated, startling. In all, it's a beautifully crafted piece of work that leaves you saddened by the mistakes that decent people make but also hopeful about the possibilities of renewal. With Noah Emmerich as a hysterical ex-cop and Jennifer Connelly as a loving wife more interested in her baby son than in her handsome but hapless husband.—*D.D.* (10/16/06) (In wide release.)

MARIE ANTOINETTE

If you want your movies to feel like watered silk—lustrous, precious, and thinner than skin—then Sofia Coppola's latest venture is for you. Kirsten Dunst, who even at her ditziest gives off a whiff of the narcoleptic, stars as Marie Antoinette, betrothed as an Austrian teen-ager to the clueless Dauphin of France (Jason Schwartzman). The sexual allure of her husband is on a par with the pink blancmanges on the dinner table, which is bad news for the royal succession but good for Coppola, who is left free to concentrate on desserts, hair styles, footwear, and other essentials of life. The result is less a character study than a pre-Revolutionary style catalogue, unembarrassed in its rage for the superficial. Somewhere beneath the frippery, there is a whisper of political threat: if the Queen really *was* as prodigal and heedless as this, no wonder the mobs were on the march. Toward the end, Coppola does indeed show Versailles under siege, but the onslaught is far too paltry, and too late, to hold any terrors. The cast is a mixed salad: Rip Torn as the randy old King, Asia Argento as his mistress, Judy Davis as a court harpy, and Marianne Faithfull, no less, as the mother of Marie Antoinette.—*A.L.* (10/23/06) (In wide release.)

PARIS BELONGS TO US

Jacques Rivette made his first feature with little funding and great difficulty between 1958 and 1960 and refracted his struggles into its plot, which combines the paranoid tension of the American film noir and the austere lyricism of the modern theatre. Anne (Betty Schneider), a young literature student in Paris, is drawn by her older brother Pierre (François Maistre) into the intertwined webs of his bohemian friends—the conspiracy theories of the American journalist Philip Kaufman (Daniel Crohem), who fled McCarthyism, and the artistic ambitions of the stage director Gérard Lenz (Giani Esposito), who is mounting a production of "Pericles" with no money. Lured by Lenz into the cast, Anne suspects that his life is endangered by the same cabal that may have killed his friend Juan, a composer whose lost final recording Lenz sends her deep into the demimonde to find. Rivette's tightly wound images turn the ornate architecture of Paris into a labyrinth of emotional entanglements and apocalyptic menace. His intricately ambiguous drama evokes the fearsome mysteries beneath the surface of life and the diverting illusions that its masterminds, human or divine, project. In French.—*R.B.* (Moving Image; Nov. 10-11.)

THE QUEEN

The new Stephen Frears film considers the deadlock, both grieving and comical, that followed the death of the Princess of Wales, in 1997. On the one hand, the Queen (Helen Mirren), believing it to be a private matter, stays and broods in Scotland with the Duke of Edinburgh (James Cromwell) and Prince Charles (Alex Jennings). On the other hand, Tony Blair (Michael Sheen), sensing a thirst for public mourning and thus a unique political opportunity, urges Her Majesty to return to London and face down the mob. And so she does; the crux of the drama comes when Mirren turns to the crowd outside Buckingham Palace and, with one smile, quashes any prospect of rebellion. The script, by Peter Morgan, relies largely on well-grounded speculation, and sticklers for accuracy will find the whole thing straying beyond belief; but, thanks to the careful performances, you subscribe all too readily to the movie's suggestion of a divided land—of a Britain caught between the trustworthy stiffness of tradition and a liberalism that is open not just to emotional honesty but to the coarseness of modern excess. With Helen McCrory as a distinctly unceremonious Cherie Blair.—*A.L.* (10/9/06) (In wide release.)

SHUT UP & SING

The great documentary filmmaker Barbara Kopple (here working with a co-director, Cecilia Peck) delivers, as usual, an impeccably managed, hands-off approach to a great subject. For

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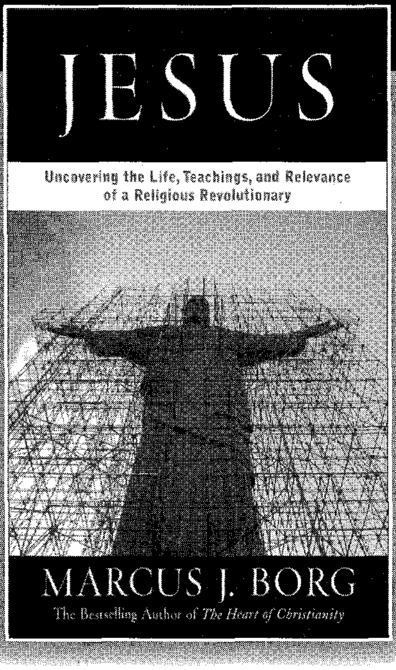
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The editor of *The New Yorker* talks with the dean of the Graduate School of Journalism.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14th
FILM SCREENING
TENACIOUS D IN THE PICK OF DESTINY
A preview screening of the new film starring Jack Black and Kyle Gass.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15th
BENEFIT FOR THE GLOBAL FUND
ABOUT AFRICA
An evening of words and music, including a conversation between Dr. Richard G. A. Feachem, executive director of the Global Fund, and the *New Yorker* staff writer Michael Specter; a fiction reading by Djimon Hounsou; and a performance by the Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra.

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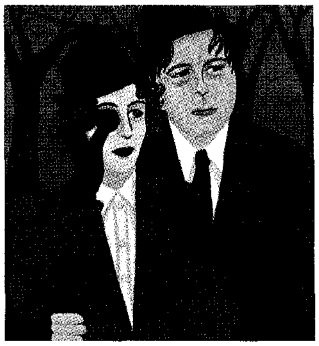
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS

The word "Mozartean," denoting an uncanny combination of elegance and strength, pathos and wit, artifice and candor, gets thrown around a little too eagerly by critics, but one movie, as almost everyone agrees, deserves this supreme benediction—Jean Renoir's "The Rules of the Game," from 1939, a farce about aristocrats and servants at play and in love. The story moves from a Parisian boudoir to a country estate and turns increasingly manic, harrowing, and sad. Working with an enormous cast, Renoir pulled off complex and physically exuberant sequences in which groups of characters get molded into twisted-figure-eight compositions that stay in balance for an instant and then dissolve, often to reassemble within the same shot. The movie is a dramatization of the many varieties of love and friendship and a charged meditation on the relations between theatre and life; at the climax, the aristocrats put on an entertainment, and the servants break into the party with wild violence that the guests mistake for another divertissement. Playing, in a fresh print, at Film Forum through Nov. 16.



—*David Denby*

three years, Kopple and Peck followed the country-pop sensation the Dixie Chicks around America, tracking the fallout from remarks made in 2003 by the lead singer Natalie Maines, who said that the group was "ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas." The quote, days before the American invasion of Iraq, sent country-radio programmers and listeners into a frenzy. The film concentrates on the effect that these protests had on the group, as well as the gradual upturn of its career as Bush's popularity waned. The film culminates with a few tunes from their new album, "Taking The Long Way," that illustrate the strength and passion required to remain defiant.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

VOLVER

The new film from Pedro Almodóvar stars Penélope Cruz as Raimunda, who is soon seen mopping up the blood of her murdered husband—slain by her daughter, whom he tried to abuse—and stashing him in a freezer. This being Almodóvar, such horrors have a jaunty edge, and the colors (red gore against blue floor) are picked out with an unembarrassed eye. The story is more or less a male-free zone, and any other director would be chastised for training his camera so devotedly on a succession of cleavages. We follow Raimunda's timid sister (Lola Dueñas) as she mourns her aunt (Chus Lampreave) and then takes up, quite happily, with the ghost of her dead mother (Carmen Maura). Misfortune has befallen every generation, yet the victims are more resigned than surprised, as if, like the cheery local hooker (María Isabel Díaz), they know all men are traitors to begin with. Hitchcockians will warm to the credit sequence, which could be by Saul Bass, and to the score, which shimmers with echoes of Bernard Herrmann; even Hitchcock, however, might have balked at the level of emotional control that Almodóvar exerts upon his characters. You feel yourself gripped by a beautiful machine, engineered for the finest melodrama. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (11/6/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CATCH A FIRE: In wide release. **FLUSHED AWAY:** In wide release. **JONESTOWN:** Quad Cinema. **THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND:** In wide release (10/2/06). **SAW III:** In wide release. **UNKNOWN:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema." Nov. 9 at 7: Short films by Stan Brakhage, including "Flesh of Morning" (1956). ♦ Special screenings. Nov. 10-12 at 7: "What Is It?" (2005, Crispin Glover), preceded by a performance by Glover. ♦ Nov. 10 and Nov. 13-14 at 7:30 and 9:30 and Nov. 11-12 at 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Me and My Brother" (1965-68, Robert Frank).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Marco Tullio Giordana. All films are in Italian. Nov. 8 at 7:30: "To Love the Damned" (1979). ♦ Nov. 9 at 4:30 and 7: "Once You're Born, You Can No Longer Hide" (2005). The 7:00 screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Nov. 10 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Especially on Sunday" (1991). ♦ Nov. 11 at 3: "The Best of Youth" (2003). ♦ Nov. 12 at 2 and 6:50: "Pasolini, an Italian Crime" (1995). ♦ Nov. 12 at 4:30 and 9:15: "The Hundred Steps" (2000). ♦ "Heroic Grace II," martial-arts films. Nov. 14 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Jade Tiger" (1977, Chor Yuen; in Mandarin).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 8-14 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Jacques Audiard. Nov. 7 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Read My Lips" (2001; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Special screening. Nov. 9 at 7:30: "Scarecrow" (1973, Jerry Schatzberg), followed by a discussion with Schatzberg and the writer Jonathan Lethem. ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Nov. 10-11: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1992, Fran Rubel Kuzui), accompanied by a sing-along. ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Nov. 14 at 7:30: "American Dream" (†), introduced by the director, Barbara Kopple.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Sundance at MOMA 2006." Nov. 8 at 8 and Nov. 12 at 4: "Sentenced to Marriage" (2004, Anat Zuria; in Hebrew). ♦ Nov. 9 at 6 and Nov. 11 at 6: "La Ciénaga" (2001, Lucrecia Martel; in Spanish). ♦ Nov. 10 and Nov. 12 at 6: "Plastic People of the Universe" (2001, Jana Chytilova; in Czech) and short films. ♦ Silent films from the Vitagraph Company. Nov. 9 at 6:15 and Nov. 11 at 4: Short films, including "A Vitagraph Romance" (1912, James Young). ♦ Nov. 9 at 8:15 and Nov. 12 at 2: "The Life of Moses" (1909, Charles Kent). ♦ Nov. 10 at 8:30 and Nov. 12 at 4: Films starring John Bunny (1910-14). ♦ "Prix Jean Vigo." Nov. 9 at 8 and Nov. 11 at 2: "A Man in a Dream" (1974, Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne) and "La Passion Selon Florimond" (1969, Laurent Gomes; in French). ♦ "Out of Time: A Contemporary View." Nov. 11 at 8:15: "Ugetsu" (1953, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese). ♦ Nov. 13 at 8: "Zidane, a Twenty-First Century Portrait" (2006, Philippe Pareno and Douglas Gordon).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—In première. Nov. 9 at 7: "Fur" (2006, Steven Shainberg), introduced by the director and James Sanders. ♦ Through Dec. 31: The films of Jacques Rivette. All films are in French. Nov. 10 at 7:30 and Nov. 11 at 3: "Paris Belongs to Us" (†). ♦ Nov. 11 at 6 and Nov. 12 at 4:30: "Céline and Julie Go Boating" (1974). ♦ "Fist and Sword," martial-arts films. Nov. 12 at 2: "Jet Li's Fearless" (2006, Ronny Yu; in Japanese, English, and Mandarin).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. Nov. 8-14 at 9: "The Last Atomic Bomb" (2005, Robert Richter; in English, Japanese, and French). ♦ Special screening. Nov. 14 at 7: "Afraid of Everything" (1999, David Barker).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Nov. 10-11: "Serenity" (2005, Joss Whedon).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Thalia Film Classics." Nov. 12 and Nov. 14 at 5: "Mouchette" (1967, Robert Bresson).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Nov. 16: "Resistance and Rebirth," Hungarian films. All films are in Hungarian. Nov. 9 at 1: "Red Psalm" (1972, Miklós Jancsó). ♦ Nov. 9 at 3 and Nov. 12 at 8:15: "God Walks Backwards" (1990, Jancsó). ♦ Nov. 10 at 4:30 and 9: "Kontroll" (2004, Nimród Antal). ♦ Nov. 11 at 6:15 and Nov. 13 at 4:15: "Vagabond" (2003, György Szomjas). ♦ Nov. 12 at 4:15: "Daniel Takes a Train" (1984, Pál Sándor). ♦ Nov. 12 at 6:15, Nov. 13 at 8:30, and Nov. 14 at 3:45: "Dallas Pashamende" (2005, Robert-Adrian Pejo). ♦ Nov. 13 at 6:15 and Nov. 14 at 1:30: "The Lord's Lantern in Budapest" (1999, Jancsó). ♦ "On Set with French Cinema." Nov. 14 at 6: "In His Hands" (2005, Anne Fontaine; in French), followed by a Q. & A. with the director.

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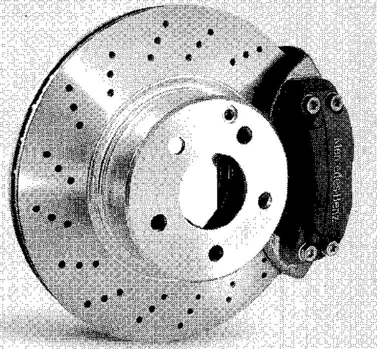

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READINGS AND TALKS

"THALIA BOOK CLUB"
The *New Yorker* cartoonist Roz Chast talks about her new collection, "Theories of Everything: Selected, Collected, and Health-Inspected Cartoons, 1978-2006." (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Nov. 8 at 7:30.)

POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA
The Society celebrates Samuel Beckett's poetry, with readings of his work by Eamon Grennan, Alice Quinn, Mary Karr, Robert Polito, and Anne Atik, the author of "How It Was: A Memoir of Samuel Beckett." (Tishman Auditorium, the New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. Nov. 9 at 7:30.)

"HAROLD CLURMAN ART SERIES"
The poets Charles Simic, Mark Strand, and Charles Wright read from their work at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting. (31 W. 27th St. 212-689-0087. Nov. 10 at 7.)

"ILLUSTRATION TODAY"
Parsons The New School for Design is sponsoring a daylong exploration of the art form, with the critic Sarah Boxer, the British artist George Hardie (the creator of album covers for Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin), the *New Yorker* contributors Maira Kalman and Peter de Sève, and many others. (66 W. 12th St. 212-229-5499. Nov. 11, from 10 to 6.)

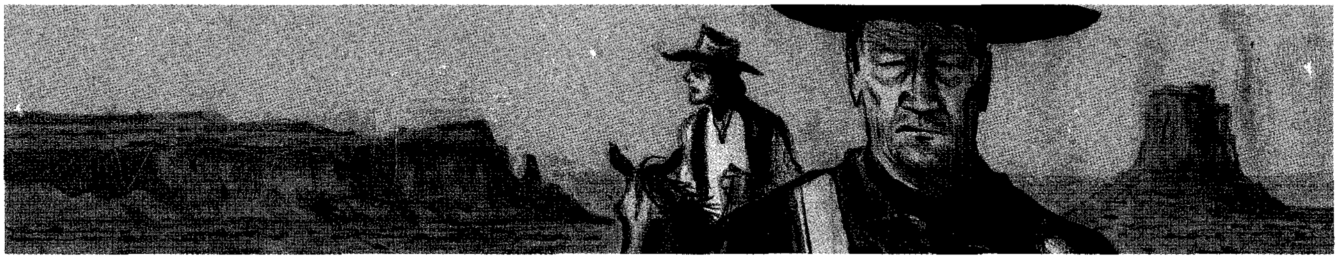
UKRAINIAN NATIONAL HOME
The writer and musician Chris Leo's new novel, "57 Octaves: Below the Middle C Buzzed by the Bee (or Really) How I Lost This Place," is about being a tour guide in New York, and it includes renditions of the city by the artist Marcellus Hall, a fellow-musician and a contributor to this magazine. On Nov. 12 at 8, Leo celebrates the book's publication at the Ukrainian National Home, where some fifty of Hall's illustrations from the book will be on display. There will readings from the novel, trivia contests, a performance by the musical group the Gospel Queens, and a screening of a short documentary about the Ping-Pong legend Marty Reisman, among other activities. (140 Second Ave., at 9th St. Tickets at the door.)

INSTITUTO CERVANTES NEW YORK
The poet and translator Clayton Eshleman reads from "The Complete Poetry of Cesar Vallejo," a bilingual collection that he recently completed after forty-eight years of work. He'll be joined by the Mexican poet Monica de la Torre, who will read the poems in Spanish. (211-215 E. 49th St. 212-308-7720. Nov. 14 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"REMEMBERING THE FULTON FISH MARKET"
A year ago, the market moved from its home in downtown Manhattan, where it had been since the early nineteenth century, to swank new digs in the Bronx. Naima Rauam, a painter and photographer who kept a studio among the fishmongers, spent more than two decades capturing the predawn trade. From Nov. 9 to Nov. 12, from noon to 7, she is showing her work. She'll be joined on Nov. 11 by Jack Putnam, of the South Street Seaport Museum, for a reading from the works of Joseph Mitchell. That day, there will also be films about the market and a guided tour of its former site. (133 Beekman St., at Front St. For more information, call 917-414-5174.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Christie's, which assisted in the sale of Gustav Klimt's gold-encrusted "Adele Bloch-Bauer I" to the Neue Galerie, offers four more Klimts from the collection of Adele and Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer (returned to the family earlier this year by the Austrian state) at its evening sale on Nov. 8, including the vibrantly colorful second portrait of Adele, in which the artist adopted a more relaxed and fluid style. This exceptionally large sale also includes important works by Picasso, Gauguin, Kirchner, and Schiele; two Impressionist day sales are held on Nov. 9. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** follows its evening sale of Impressionist and modern art works on Nov. 7 with a wide-ranging two-part auction on Nov. 8; a portrait of Dora Maar by Picasso and a magical Chinese-lantern-lit scene by Le Sidanier are among the favored lots. The house then moves on to sumptuous French furniture from the collection of the prominent doctor Alexandre Benchoufi (Nov. 9), a prelude to its larger sale of French and Continental furniture, ceramics, and carpets held on the next day. More than seven hundred lots are included in a vast two-day auction (on Nov. 10-11) of porcelain, virtu, miniatures, and snuffboxes, all collected by the connoisseur and dealer Hanns Weinberg. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Colorful and stylish images from the twenties and thirties suggest the bygone glamour of transcontinental tourism at **Swann's** latest auction of travel posters (Nov. 13). (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



John Wayne in John Ford's "The Searchers," at BAM.

CHRISTOPHE BLAIN

ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TO THE GATEHOUSE
Nov. 14-18

Harlem gains a major new performance space with the Gatehouse, a Romanesque-revival building at the corner of 135th Street and Convent Avenue that was once used to channel water from the Croton Aqueduct, in upper Westchester County. The recently opened theatre, which seats nearly two hundred, offers five performances of "Reflections," settings of the poetry of Rita Dove by the noted composer Tania León. (212-650-7100.)

MOVIES
PRINT THE LEGEND
Nov. 22-29

At Thanksgiving, Americans mythologize the ethnic mix on which the nation was founded. No filmmaker treated prejudice and myth as deeply as John Ford. BAM will screen "The Searchers," in which a young woman's life depends on a vengeful fighter (John Wayne) overcoming his hatred of Indians. Later entries include "The Sun Shines Bright," from 1953, and a pair of films starring James Stewart, "Two Rode Together" and "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance." (718-636-4100.)

NIGHT LIFE
WORLD'S GREATEST
Dec. 1

Following the release of the movie "Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny," Jack Black and Kyle Gass bring their twisted acoustic heavy-metal act to Madison Square Garden. (212-307-7171.)

ART
FINE LINE
Dec. 1-March 4

Saul Steinberg's illustrations and cover designs ran in this magazine for six decades; he also made sculptural assemblages, printed objects, stage sets, and more. The Morgan Library's "Saul Steinberg: Illuminations" will review the breadth and inventiveness of his prolific career. (212-685-0008.)

DANCE
NOT CONSTANTINOPLE
Dec. 8-16

Pina Bausch, who last came to town with her evocative "For the Children of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in 2004, is now making dances about cities. In December, she returns to BAM with "Nefés," an ode to Istanbul that she created while in residence in Turkey. (718-636-4100.)

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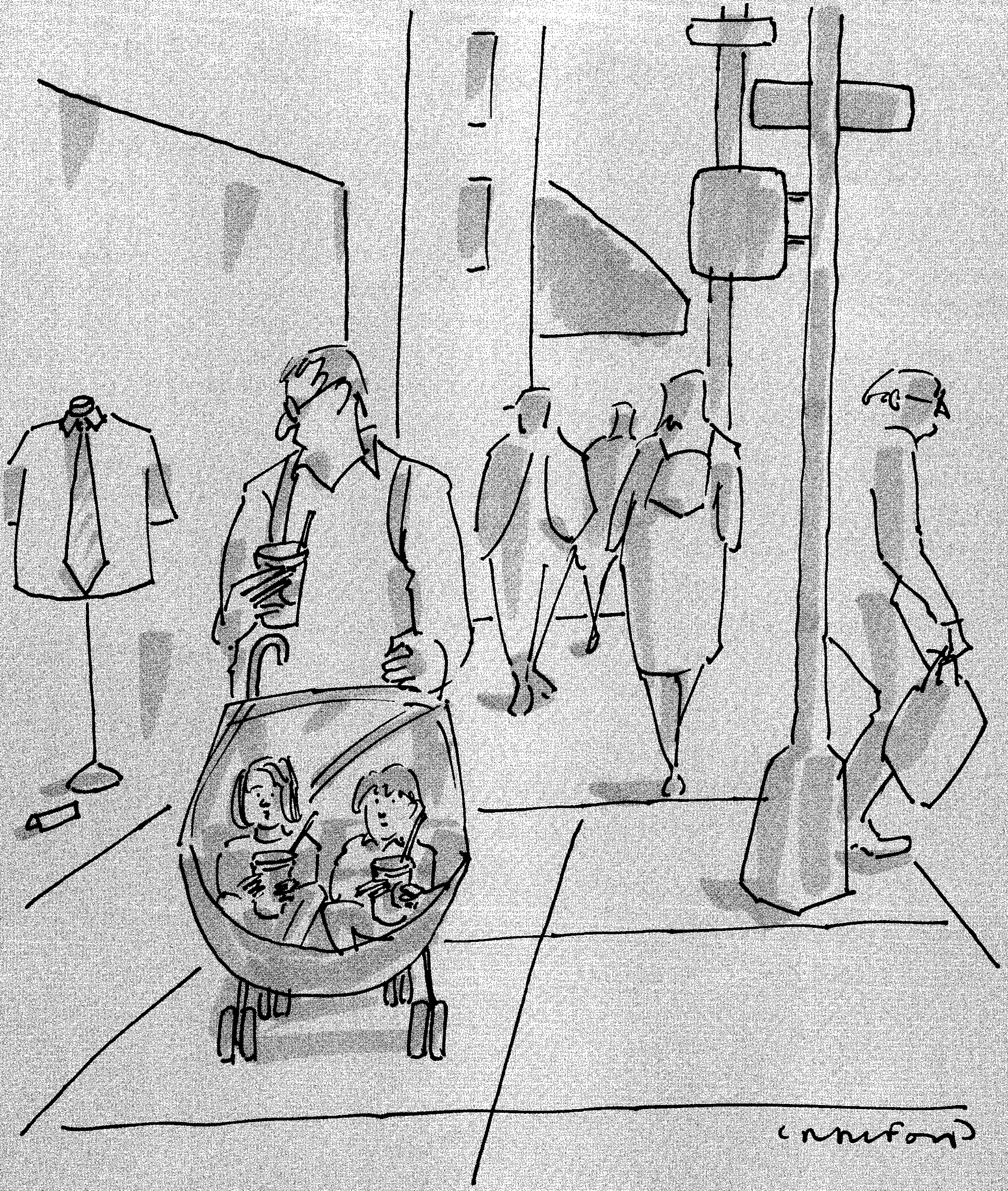

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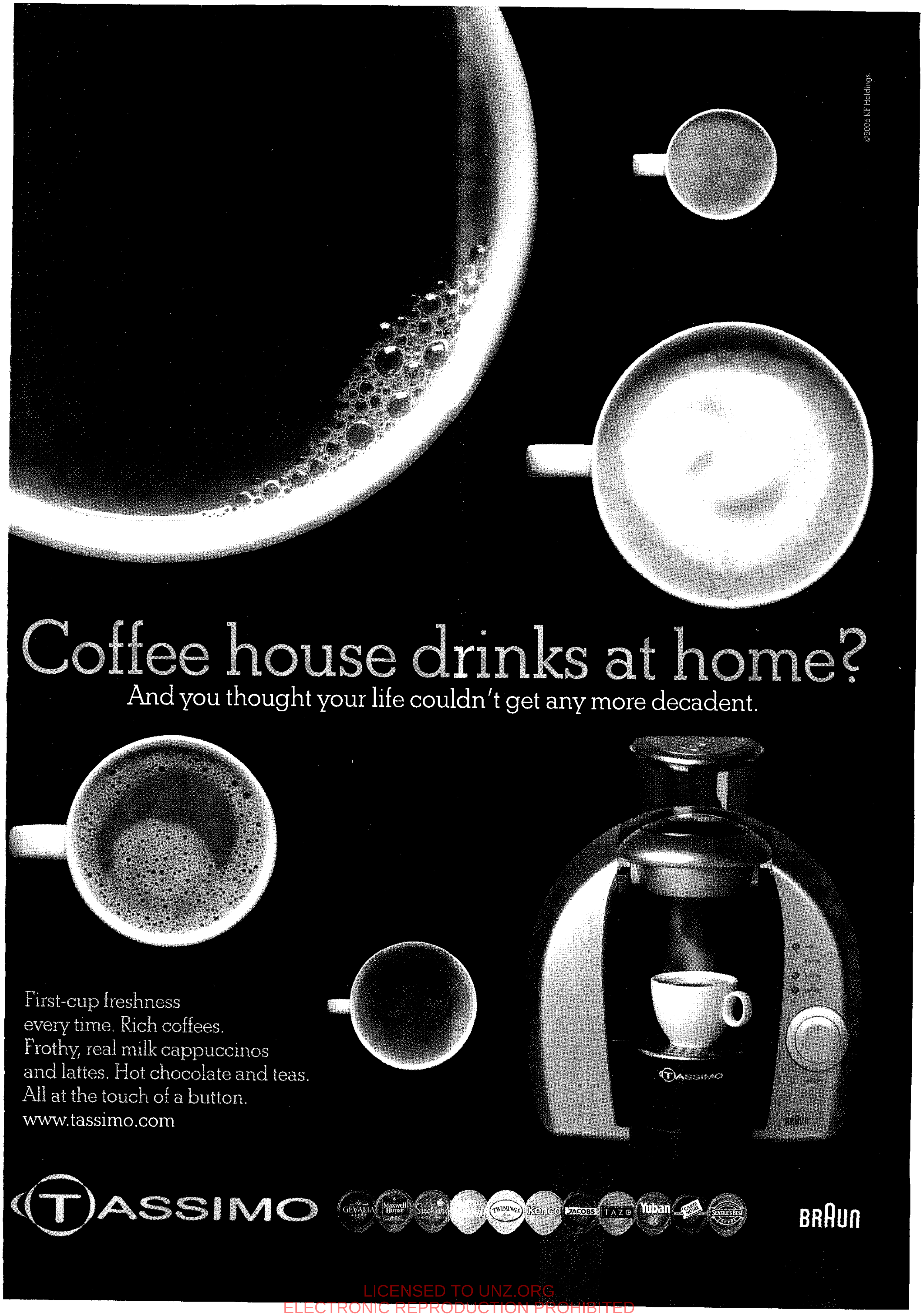
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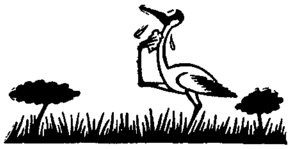
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
HIGH COSTS



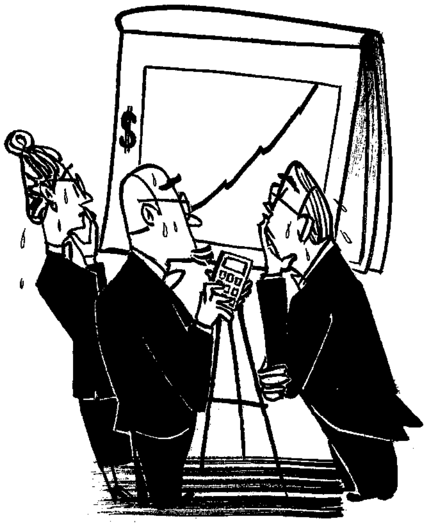
Throughout the midterm campaign season, at least one major issue was conspicuously absent from debate. Except in California, where Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger reinvigorated his bid for reëlection by vowing to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, climate change was barely mentioned. This can't be wholly blamed on the politicians: according to a recent Pew Research Center survey, Americans still rank global warming as a low policy priority—far behind Iraq, the economy, and health care—with less than half of respondents designating it a "very important" issue.

Given the news out of Baghdad, it's only natural that people would choose to focus on catastrophes unfolding in real time, but the longer that global warming is ignored the more intractable it becomes—a point made forcefully last week in a report issued by the British government. Unless the nations of the world come together to control emissions, the report said, we face the risk of "major disruptions to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The report's author, Sir Nicholas Stern, the head of Britain's Government Economic Service, is hardly a scaremonger. He combines a strong academic background—Cambridge, Oxford, and the London School of Economics—with practical experience. After the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, he spent six years at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. From 2000 through 2003, he was the World Bank's Chief Economist. Last year, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asked him to examine the economic consequences of climate change and make recommendations for what governments should do about it. The report Stern delivered, at six hundred pages, sets a new benchmark for policy discussion.

The Bush Administration and its ideological and corporate allies have downplayed the scientific evidence for global warming while complaining that taking on climate change in a major way would place too great a burden on the economy. Stern, who came to the subject fresh, dismisses these views. He says, "Climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent global response."



At the launch presentation of his report, Stern pointed out that global warming is a textbook case of an "externality," in which the prices people pay for gasoline, electric power, and other energy products don't reflect their true costs, among them the impact of greenhouse gases. "Our emissions affect the lives of others," he explained. "When people do not pay for the consequences of their actions, we have market failure. This is the greatest market failure the world has seen."

There are a number of ways to deal with market failures, including taxes, regulation, and compulsory voucher schemes that force corporations and other organizations to pay for the negative side effects of their activities, such as environmental pollution. Bringing carbon emissions under control is such a mammoth task, Stern says, that all these remedies will be needed. By 2050, for example, at least sixty per cent of global power capacity will have to come from non-carbon sources, such as wind farms, solar cells, and nuclear reactors; at the moment, the proportion is less than twenty-five per cent. "Mitigation—taking strong action to reduce emissions—must be viewed as an investment," the report says. "If these investments are made wisely, the costs will be manageable, and there will be a wide range of opportunities for growth and development along the way."

The figures that Stern and his team of researchers provide should be regarded as best guesses rather than precise forecasts, but they are instructive nonetheless. Stabilizing greenhouse-gas emissions at somewhat above current levels by 2050 would cost about one per cent of the annual global gross domestic product, or about half a trillion dollars. That's a lot of money, but it's cheap compared with the costs we will eventually face if we do nothing—between five per cent and twenty per cent of annual world G.D.P., or as much as nine trillion dollars a year. (The G.D.P. of the United States last year was twelve and a half trillion dollars.)

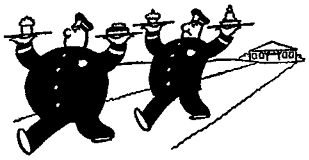
These estimates are based on adding up things like a crash in the Australian tourism industry, resulting from the devastation of the Great Barrier Reef; higher property-insurance premiums in Florida, because of coastal surges; lower crop yields for Italian farmers, caused by water shortages in the Mediterranean region; and a precipitous decline in the already poverty-stricken economy of Bangladesh, owing to the fact that parts of the country may be under water.

Some cold countries, such as Russia and Sweden, may benefit economically as their climate warms up, but the overall impact is sharply negative, especially when monetary values are assigned to consequences like forced migrations, the destruction of the rain forests, and the spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever. (Previous studies understated the economic impact of global warming because they didn't account for such collateral effects.) In general, poor countries, especially those in tropical areas, will be affected most by global warming, and their economic sufferings will likely trigger instability. In West Africa, for example, seventeen countries share many of the same threatened water sources, and, the report says, "the region faces a serious risk of water-related conflict."

Prime Minister Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have pledged to cut Britain's carbon emissions by sixty per cent over the next four decades, an agenda the opposition Conservative Party also endorses. But, as Blair pointed out last week, if Britain were to cease all its emissions overnight, the beneficial impact would be wiped out by just two years of growth in China's emissions. Blair and Brown also know that the problem can't be seriously tackled without the participation of the United States, which leads the world in greenhouse-gas emissions. It is a measure of their estrangement from the Bush Administration—on this topic, at least—that they have hired none other than Al Gore to advise them on environmental policy. In addition, they have dispatched Stern to Beijing, New Delhi, and Washington to make the case for prompt international action. He might want to save burning some jet fuel and skip the American leg of the trip. Samuel Thernstrom, a former senior official at Bush's White House Council on Environmental Quality, told a British reporter, "What I see so far today does not give me any reason to believe that Mr. Stern can be a spokesman who can change minds." He added, "I don't see a whole lot new here."

—*John Cassidy*

BEDFELLOWS DEPT.
THE FAT LOBBY



The rule, when it comes to battling prohibitions, seems to be the badder the thing, the better the lobby. Of New York City's many bans—against ferrets, small planes, cell phones in schools, smoking in bars, beekeeping, lead paint—the one proposed, this month, against trans fats is neither the most nor the least contentious. This situation presents some difficulty, at least in terms of political mobilization. In the absence of any standing organization pledged to uphold the interests of nacho munchers and shortcake fiends, cholesterol defenders have been forced to proceed ad hoc. So far, they comprise a ragtag band.

The fat lobby's strategic operations are being run by administrators on loan from other groups: Richard Lipsky, of the Neighborhood Retail Alliance (the other N.R.A.), and the New York State Restaurant Association's Chuck Hunt. The corporate guns—McDonald's and the manufacturers of the hydrogenated oils that the plan seeks to eliminate—have been oddly missing from the debate. Lipsky has worked on campaigns involving Wal-Mart, street furniture, the bodega tax (against), and the legalization of garbage disposals (for); in his opinion, the concern about trans fats is legitimate, though he believes that the city's lack of communication with small businesses presents "a real élitist issue." Hunt cultivates a temperate stance—"The ban should take place on a voluntary basis, over a longer period of time"—and has emerged as the group's Ken Mehlman, composing a trans-fats questionnaire, which he mailed to about four hundred of the N.Y.S.R.A.'s members. Of the forty-two responses he received, many evinced commitment to the cause ("I object to the idea that N.Y.C. restaurants are somehow responsible for individuals' lack of nutritional moderation," "What's next: Bacon! Sausage! Cakes!") while others seemed unconcerned ("Hi, Chuck!"). One respondent wrote that he had switched to canola oil fifteen years ago and added, "We also offer tofu jack cheese made from soy, as well as non-fat sour cream to replace regular sour cream and cheese which can be substituted in any of our menu items."

If Lipsky and Hunt are the policy wonks, then Louis Nunez, the president of the local Latino Restaurant Association, has emerged as the man on the ground. (The Axis of Trans Fats, he explained later, is largely Latino/African-American/Chinese.) Nunez spreads his energies among several movements. "I'm involved with Let Free Children, H.I.V. outreach, and the Federation of Hispanic Chambers of Commerce," he said. "And I sponsor a Little League team." Last Thursday, he embarked in his black minivan on a listening tour of the boroughs. His first stop was in Hell's Kitchen, at a Cuban restaurant called Azucar.

William Giraldo, the day manager, was on duty. "So what's up, Louis?"

Nunez launched into his spiel: many Latino restaurants hadn't received an explanatory mailing from the Health Department; customers won't like the new taste; and—tweaked for the Cuban beat—what is this, a Communist country?

Giraldo explained that his chef had stopped using trans fats six months ago, but added, "Guys in Italian food, they

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don't have this problem, because they use olive oil. They are not going to suffer a lot in terms of the sauces, but maybe when it comes to baking."

Back in the van, Nunez headed uptown, to Spanish Harlem. He spotted a Jamaican restaurant and decided to pop in. A man and a woman sat at a front table with a stack of bills.

"*Hola*, you giving money away? You guys cook with trans fats?"

They ignored him.

"I don't know what it is, but it sure smells delicious," Nunez said, to no one in particular. He left.

At El Coqui, a cuchifritos joint on Third Avenue, a cook told Nunez that the boss had come in just the day before and told the staff that they had to switch frying oils. Nunez bought a taco, a chicharron de puerco, two alcapurrias, and a few pieces of pernil.

He took them back to the van, and said, "I'm pretty sure they still use trans fats." He thought that the cook had panicked, assuming he was a health inspector. Nunez took a bite of a greasy, golden alcapurria. "Nope! It's lighter and it doesn't have the good trans-fat taste. It's flat. Normally, I would never add salt, but this needs it. I'm not even going to finish." He wrapped the half-eaten patty in a napkin and stuffed it in a paper bag.

Half an hour later, he'd made it to the Bronx, to canvass Joe Torres, at Joe's Place. Torres was unaware of the proposed ban and uses lard, a trans fat, in such dishes as mofongo and his special Pork Chop Can Can.

"They're trying to make changes," Nunez said, "without consulting people like you, who are experts in the industry."

"I change my grease two times a week," he said.

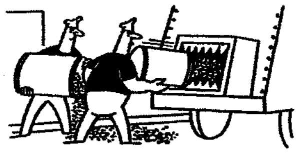
"So if you switch to non-trans-fat oil, you're probably going to have to change it three times," Nunez said. "Did you get a letter from the city?"

Torres seemed calm; the last time he'd had a problem with an ordinance, something about Dumpsters, he'd worked things out after bumping into the borough president in Home Depot.

The coalition is far from a united front, and other members are more combative: the chef Jimmy Bradley (of the Red Cat in Chelsea), who received two stars from the *Times* and likes to make biscuits with shortening, advocated a form of civil disobedience, suggesting the notion of a Crisco speakeasy. "We're gonna cook whatever we want to," he said, "no matter what law they pass." The pan-activist Audrey Silk, a retired cop and former Libertarian candidate for mayor, is perhaps the movement's earliest and truest believer. In her role as the founder of a group called CLASH (Citizens Lobbying Against Smoker Harassment), she presciently heckled Mayor Bloomberg in 2002 at a smoking-ban hearing—"I know that you love to eat chunky peanut butter with bacon and bananas. How about I come out and start a campaign to tax that bacon?" For years, she'd been warning Chuck Hunt, "Food will be next!" The other day, over the telephone, she said with satisfaction, "I've been giving him I-told-you-sos up the ying-yang."

—*Lauren Collins*

IN THE ACADEMY
DR. GARBAGE



There is a saying among the rank-and-file members of the Department of Sanitation, otherwise known as san men, or New York's Strongest: "You can go your whole life without ever having to call a fireman, and if you're lucky you'll never have to call a cop, but you want to see a sanitation worker every day." Robin Nagle, the director of N.Y.U.'s Draper Interdisciplinary Master's Program in Humanities and Social Thought, cited this adage the other day in the course of explaining her new gig as the D.S.N.Y.'s official anthropologist-in-residence, a role that seems to involve at least as much cheerleading as it does scholarship. "If every anthropologist in the country folds up his research kit and goes home, the world isn't necessarily going to notice," she said. "But, if every san man in the world packs up his kit and goes home, we're in trouble."

The position is unpaid, and comes with the blessing of Sanitation's artist-in-residence, Mierle Laderman Ukeles (also unpaid). (Her conceptual work "Touch Sanitation," completed in 1980, involved her shaking hands with eighty-five hundred san men.) Nagle's office remains at N.Y.U., but her field work, in her first few weeks on the job, has taken her to Rocco DiRico's auto-repair shop, off Queens Boulevard, where the trucks and street sweepers get serviced, and to Floyd Bennett Field, where employee training takes place. "I'm putting together a presentation for new hires, so that people will understand the legacy," she said, sitting behind her desk, on which she'd neatly stacked a few issues of the magazine *Waste Age* next to a book called "High Tech Trash." ("It's really gripping reading," she said.)

Nagle, who is forty-five, has been researching the Department of Sanitation for the past several years, while working on a book, "Picking Up." At first, the san men were convinced that she was a plant, from one of various surveillance agencies. "We are from different worlds," she acknowledged. "I have tried to close the gap between us. I walk in, I'm female, I'm an egghead, I'm older, I have a Ph.D.—for some reason, they foreground that. My response is 'La-di-fucking-da, I have a Ph.D. Whatever.'"

She said that she had earned her commercial driver's license in 2004, and pointed to a Teamsters Local 831 jacket hanging behind the door, with "Robin" embroidered on the front. "You have to know what you're doing or you'll end up killing somebody," she said. "As one of my instructors told me, if a car can be a weapon, a garbage truck can be a nuclear weapon."

Nagle's interests lie more with the trash collectors than with the trash, although the two intersect on the subject of "mongo"—sanitation lingo for "redeemed garbage" or the act of collecting it. (Nagle consulted a lexicographer, looking for help in tracking down the etymology, to no avail.) "Within the department, if you

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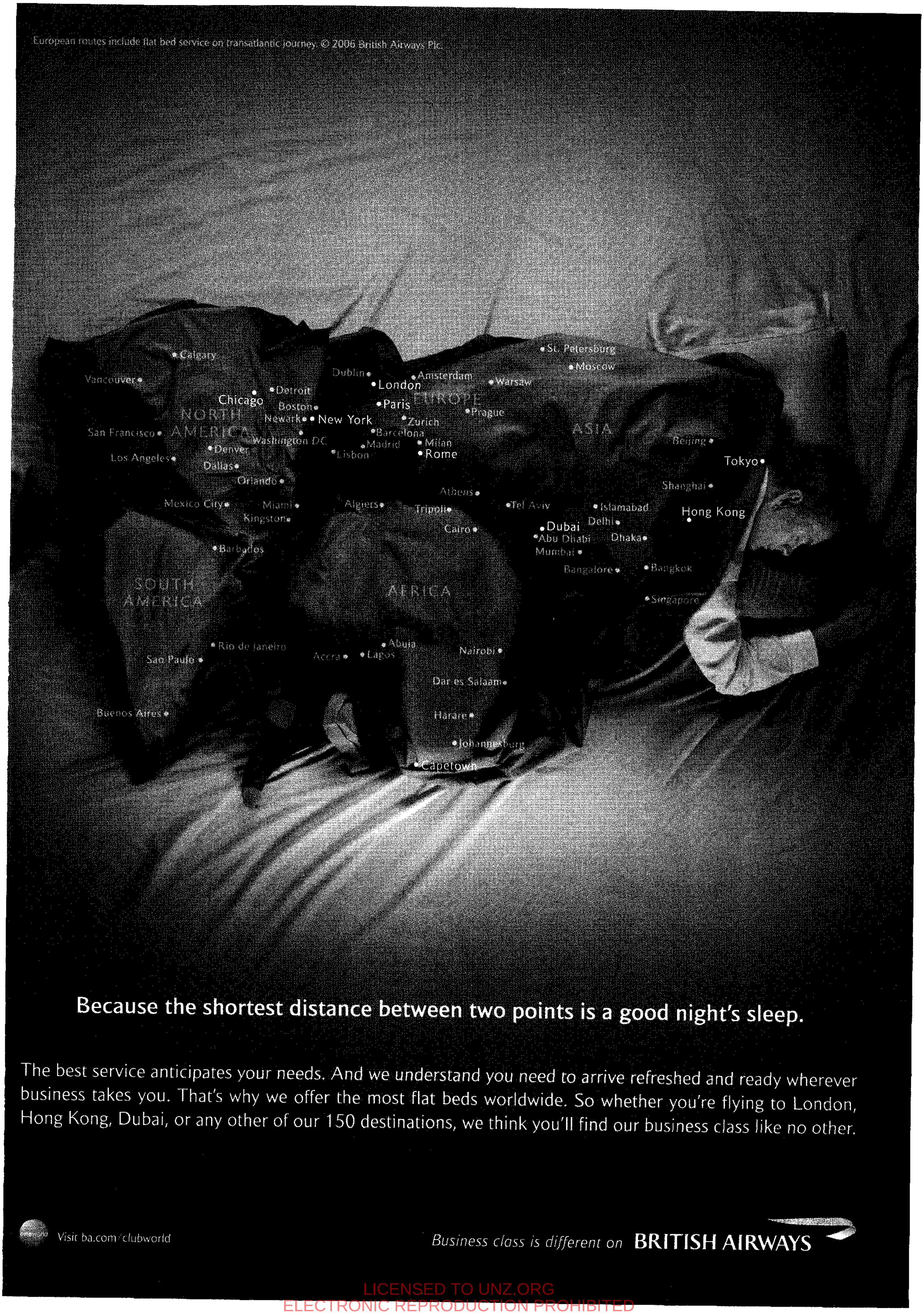
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mongo or if you don't—there's kind of a dividing line," she said. " 'He mongos.' 'Do you mongo?' 'Oh, mongo, are you kidding? I wouldn't mongo.' " She paused. "Hell, I mongo, absolutely. And I have some pretty nice things." A book cart to her left bore a sticker that read "NYU Asset Management: Authorized for Disposal." She had found it on the curb. Maps on the walls outside her office were rescued from a Dumpster. And her winter wardrobe draws heavily from a stash of cashmere sweaters that she found in a garbage bag behind the Dakota, while accompanying a san man known as the Mongo King on his rounds, in 2003.

The first major charge of her residency will be to organize a Wall of Honor, commemorating all the men and women who have lost their lives in the line of duty, dating back to 1881; nationally, fatality rates for sanitation workers, owing to the risks associated with loading trucks in the midst of moving traffic, are roughly three times those for firemen and policemen. Next, she plans to coördinate a sanitation museum.

"Let's imagine this: On the nightly news every day, there's a Waste Watch," she said, and then affected a news anchor's stentorian tone: " 'Well, we see East Queens seems to be up in tonnage this week for reasons we can't quite discern, whereas Brooklyn in the northwest quadrant has reduced its solid-waste generation by a staggering fifteen per cent since a month ago.' A waste man, to complement the weatherman—"How cool would that be?" Nagle said.

—Ben McGrath

SHATTERED
WANTED: S.W.F., LOVES KEEF

The persistence of the Rolling Stones, like that of diphtheria or kudzu, is a riddle of nature. As a band, they are easy to mock: a collection of wealthy gents adding to their fortunes each year by replaying their tunes of sexual dissatisfaction and satanic dread. The Stones are not so much a band as a corporate juggernaut like Citibank or Microsoft, and an enduring medical miracle: Can *your* grandfather even *climb* a tree, much less fall out of one, bash his head, survive, and still remember the changes on "Sister Morphine"?

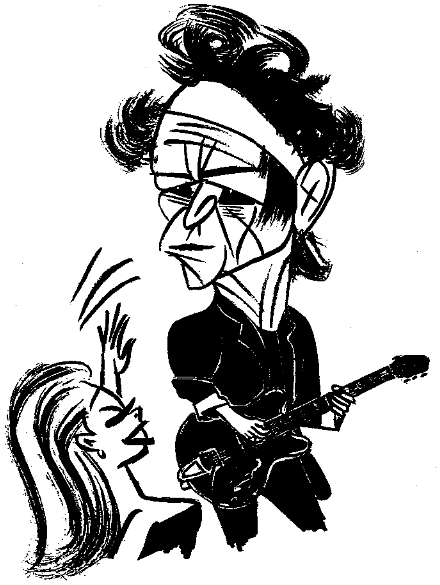
As a matter of fiduciary responsibility, the Stones almost always play vast venues like Giants Stadium—a date at the Garden is considered *très intime*—and the Baby Boomer fan comes to the event with three beers, two or more indulgent children, and the keys to the minivan; the Boomer then watches Mick and Keef on huge screens as the real Mick and Keef scuttle around on the stage. Martin Scorsese, who is working on a documentary feature about the Stones, wanted a much smaller venue—something less Leni Riefenstahl, more Ingmar Bergman—and so the band agreed to play a couple of nights at the twenty-eight-hundred-seat Beacon Theatre, the Art Deco gem on the Upper West Side.

The theatre's orchestra section was made even smaller because Scorsese had set up seventeen large movie cameras; there were also three runways built to thrust out into the crowd, the better for Mick to do his prancing thing. Perhaps the most important equipment required, however, was a suitable-looking audience. Bill Clinton's charitable foundation had taken up a block of tickets for one of the concerts, but it would certainly not do, for Scorsese's purposes, to have John Podesta playing air guitar in the front row.

And so the movie people had advertised for, and summoned, a flock of camera-ready fans through Shidoobee, a Stones Internet message board. In order to be considered, Shidoobees, as the fans call themselves, had to submit a photo and then wait to be called. If they were selected, they would be paid seventy-five dollars to attend the concert. The producers were evidently underwhelmed by the sexiness of the group on the first night, and so they took special pains for the second show, issuing a set of revised instructions to all would-be seat fillers:

> You should be dressed trendy, sexy, hip. Do not come looking sloppy or disheveled. Women really glam it up, but not trashy. You can wear Rolling Stones shirts or other band shirts but please do NOT wear the following: no fan club shirts, no logos (Nike, Coca-Cola), nothing too over the top and outrageous (wigs, crazy hats, etc.) and do not wear WHITE....
>
> You will not be allowed to purchase alcohol. Again, you are not just attending a concert, you are working.
>
> MOST IMPORTANT NOTE: You guys will be in the very front of the stage and will be the only people on camera for the documentary. We really need high energy. Dance, sing along, cheer on the band. They need your energy to play a really amazing show.

On the first night, a forty-four-year-old Shidoobee from Levittown named Debi Gula arrived at P.S. 87, where the extras had been asked to convene, wearing a black leather vest covered with Stones buttons and decorated, on the back, with an elaborately sequinned lips logo. "Since '81, I've missed one tour," she said. "The farthest back I've been was sixteenth row, in Hartford."



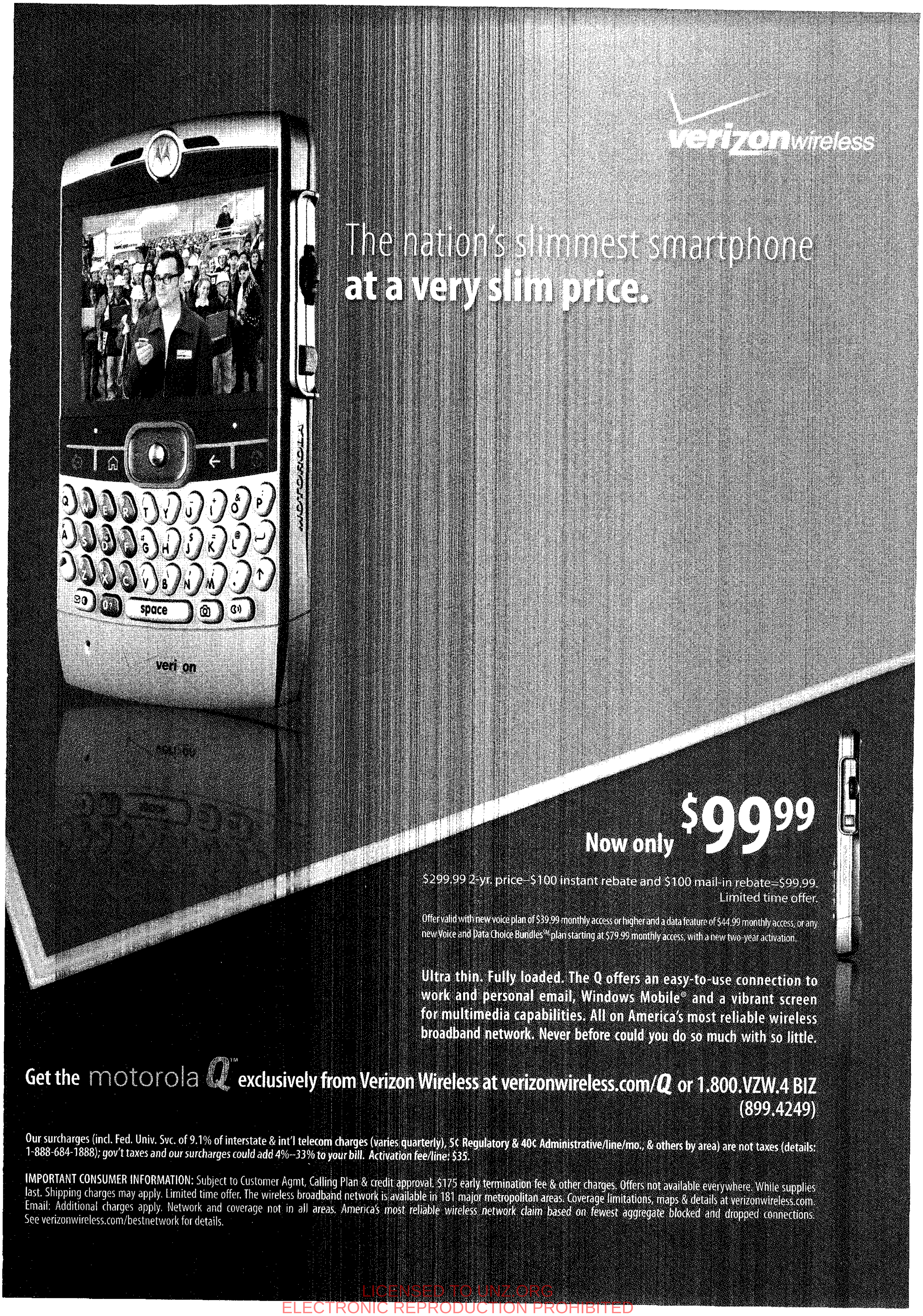
Keef and fan

Once inside the theatre, the hopeful extras stood in line in the aisle of the orchestra, waiting to be told where to go. An assistant picked through the queue: young ones, small ones, cute ones. A pregnant fan narrowly escaped being turned away.

"What are they looking for?" one woman asked nervously.

After a spry set from the legendary Buddy Guy, various assistants started rearranging the crowd in order to create just the right blend of sex, youth, and spontaneity. Gula and another woman were positioned at the foot of stage left, Keith's side. Several grizzled Shidoobees who had been in the front row were moved to the rear, replaced by newly arrived statuesque young blondes in tight jeans and boots.

In the pause before the Stones came on, a few more women were brought in. A roving crew member murmured into a walkie-talkie, "I don't have any more babes." Albert Maysles, the surviving director of the 1970 Stones documentary, "Gimme Shelter," stood at the front of the



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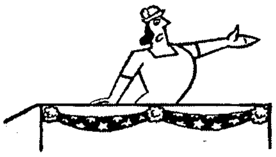
stage, smiling beatifically, using a handheld video camera to pan the crowd. Scorsese was nowhere to be seen. Within a few minutes, Jagger was preening and singing duets with Jack White and Christina Aguilera. In contrast to the highly managed vibe of the rest of the evening, the performance itself was stripped-down and raw. Some of the statuesque seventy-five-dollar women looked bored, some walked out. But when the band played "Satisfaction," for an encore, many of the remaining pretty girls bounced up and down and even sang along.

Debi Gula made the cut for both nights, and she noticed the transformation from one to the next. "Diehard fans got screwed out of this," she said. "Honestly, it sucks." But when she was asked how she enjoyed the show, her eyes sparkled. "Did you see Keith give me the pelvic thrust? Some people think he's God, others think it's time to go to the bathroom when he's on. You never get up when Keith sings."

—*Shauna Lyon*

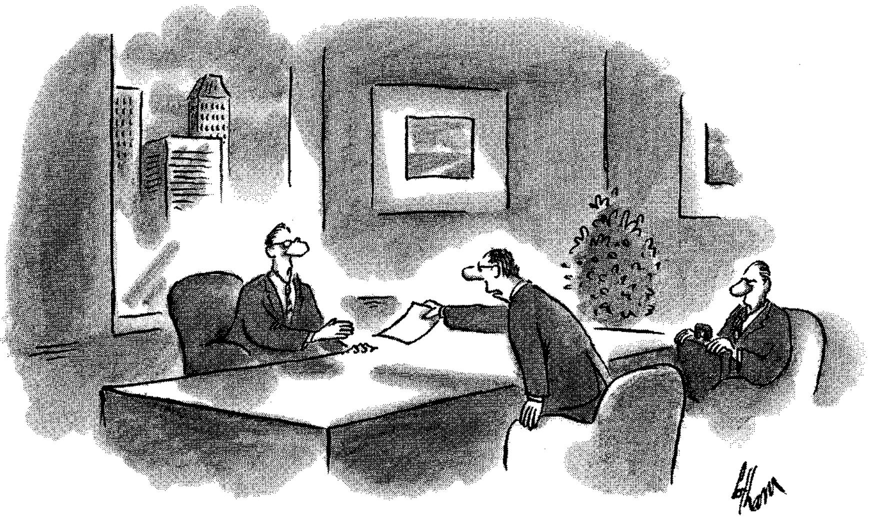
TRUCE DEPT.
BELLA VS. BETTY



In a year of all-too-public reconciliations (ranging from Tom and Brooke to Paris and Nicole), word of a rapprochement between the followers of the late Betty Friedan and those of the late Bella Abzug has been relatively slow to spread. It all started, inauspiciously enough, with Friedan's death, in February. "The family wanted the funeral to be a family ceremony," Sidney Abbott, the founder of a group called Women's Rights Are Human Rights, explained recently. "But there were many frustrated feminists there who wanted to hear what Kate"—Kate Millett, the author of the 1970 manifesto "Sexual Politics"—"and others had to say."

Abbott, the co-author of the 1972 book "Sappho Was a Right-On Woman," decided to plan a proper sendoff. Having set a date—Women's Equality Day, the eighty-sixth anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment—she prevailed upon N.Y.U. to lend space at its law school. Coretta Scott King, who passed away the same week as Friedan, would be remembered, as would Abzug, who died in 1998. Millett would at last deliver her eulogy, but the event would not be a wake: it would be forward-looking, with workshops, awards, and calls to action.

Abbott set about enlisting old acquaintances, some of whom were wary of a Betty-Bella doubleheader. "Feminist lore has it that the National Women's Political Caucus was Betty Friedan's brainchild," Abbott said. "But then Bella and Gloria Steinem came in." As Judith Hennessee wrote in her biography of Friedan, "Bella and Betty were like the North Vietnamese and the Americans fighting over the shape of the table at the Paris Peace Conferences." In her column for *McCall's*, Friedan called Abzug and Steinem "female chauvinist boors." A typical Abzug retort: "Once again Betty Friedan is exercising her right to be wrong." In the weeks leading up to the event, the two camps remained divided. Abbott said, "Each side was saying, 'That's a Bella person!' or 'That's a Betty person!' "



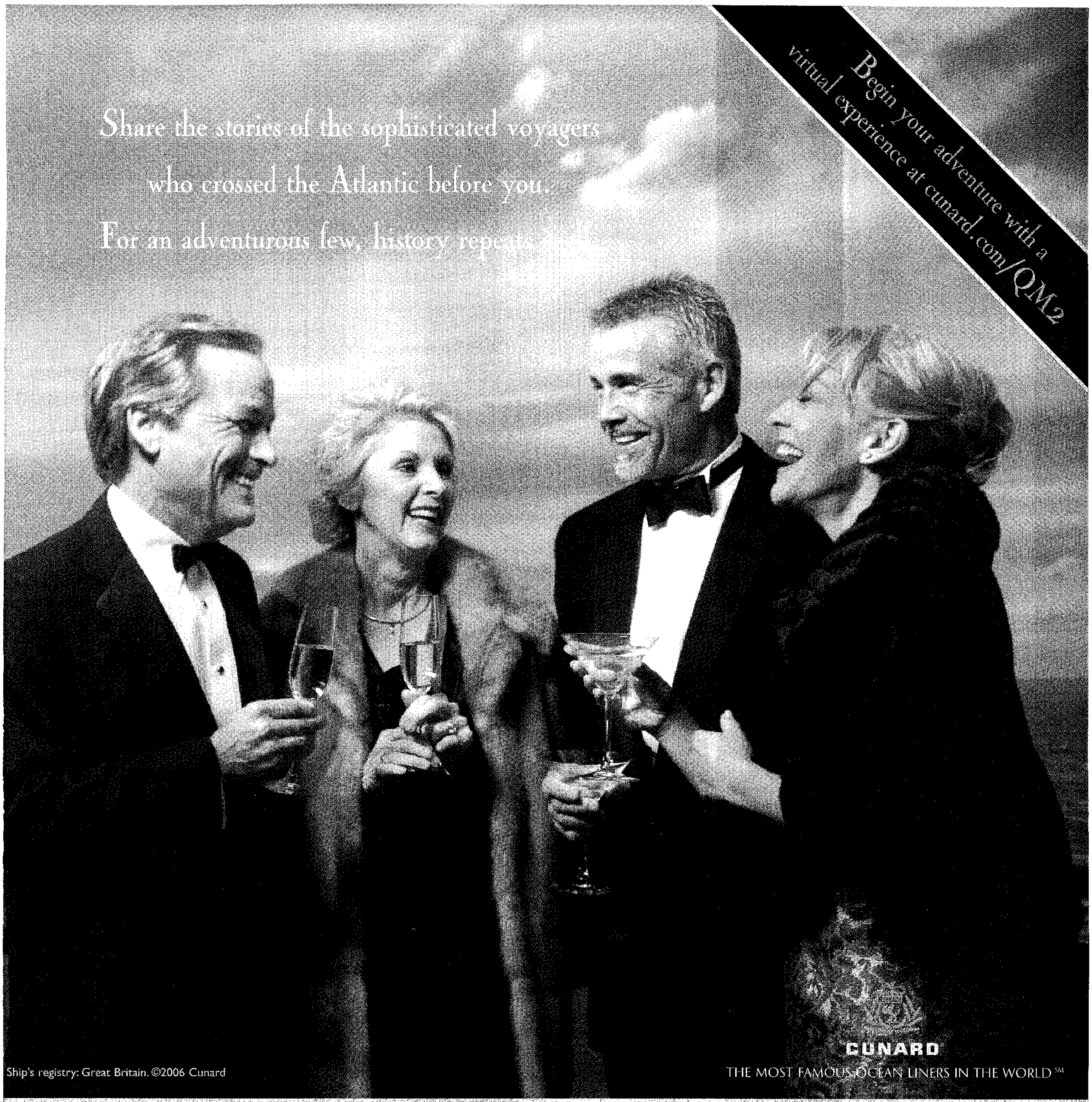
"I've arranged our options according to their legality."

But on the day of the conference peace prevailed. There were crudités and iced tea, hugs, exclamations of names, and a display of old photographs by Bettye Lane, a longtime chronicler of the feminist movement. "A lot of my friends from the seventies are gone now," Lane, who was wearing blue-tinted glasses, said. She spotted Millett, whose hair is white and who was wearing a pink shawl and sneakers. "Kate, you're in the display!" she shouted. Barbara Love, whose encyclopedia of second-wave feminists came out this fall, was busy locating people mentioned in her book and affixing to their blouses yellow stickers that read "A Feminist Who Changed America, '63-'75."

Soon the women began filing into Tishman Auditorium for the afternoon's main program. There were lots of speakers, but the subject of Friedan and Abzug's relationship came up again and again. "In those days, Bella and Betty, it seemed, were always at odds," Jacqui Ceballos, the head of Veteran Feminists of America, said. "But a few years ago they were coming in on the bus from Long Island, the Jitney, and when they saw each other they told their friends to get out of the way," she said. "The two of them sat down and talked. Such powerful, wonderful women. We were so lucky to live in their time." There were murmurs and nods across the audience, from Bella people and Betty people alike.

The proceedings were interspersed with music. ("It's kind of hard to get people into a militant state of mind without music," Abbott said.) The singer-songwriter Sandy Rapp had composed a song for the occasion, "Rise Up Ye Women," which started like this: "It was a time of dark and sad song/ Seven years with Bella been and gone." There followed a stanza about Friedan, one about Rosa Parks, one cataloguing other recent losses ("Molly Yard went marchin' to the rally in the sky/And C. DeLores Tucker left as well"), and then the final verse: "And let us sing, Coretta Scott King/For out from Alabama did she go/And there was Bella's scribe Mim Kelber/There was Wendy Wasserstein/And we lost 'em all within a year, ya know."

—*Kate Julian*



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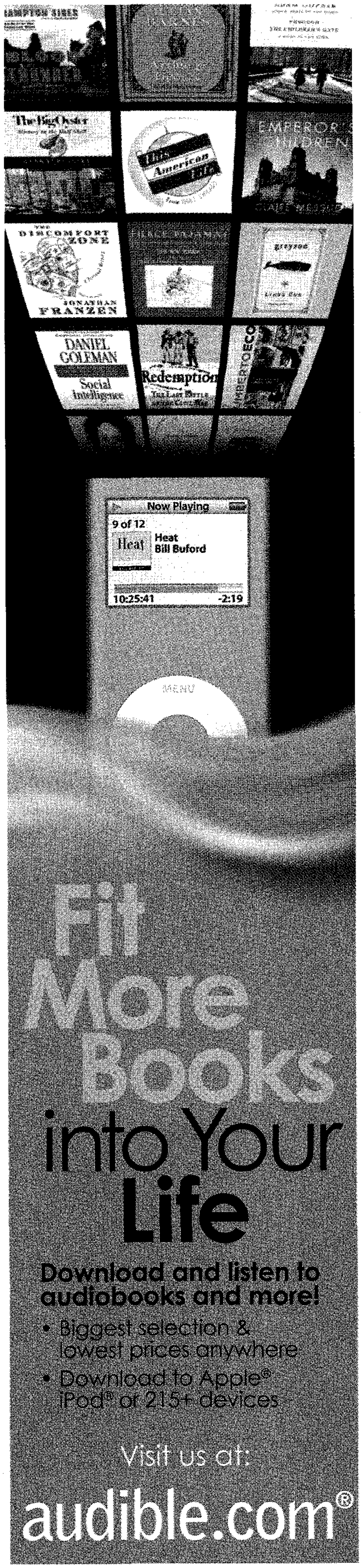


OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

HOLY ROLLERS

The city's bicycle zealots.

BY BEN McGRATH

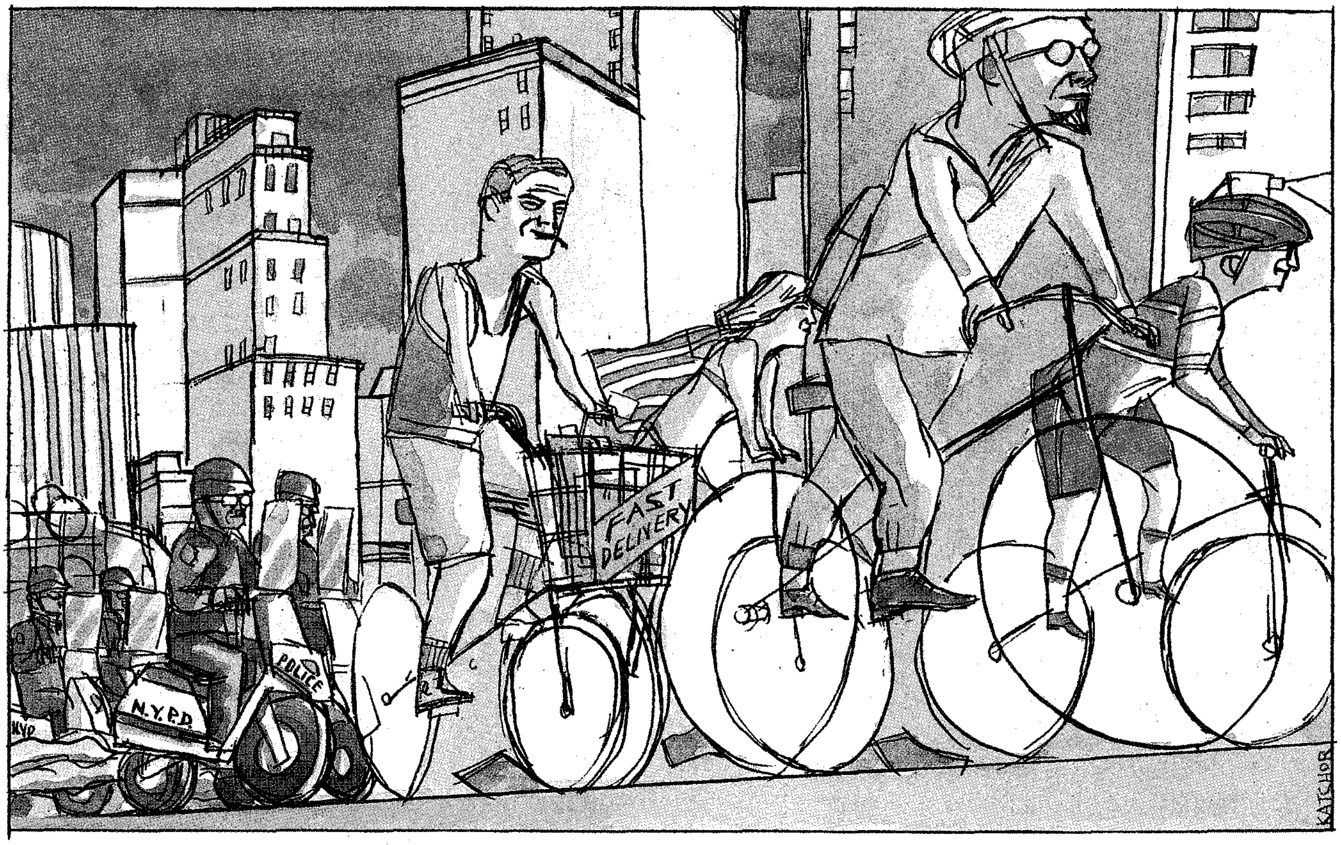
In the fall of 1971, two years after the Stonewall Rebellion, sixteen months after Kent State, and a couple of weeks after the prison riots at Attica, a few hundred bicyclists rode down Fifth Avenue and on to City Hall, demonstrating for the institution of dedicated bike lanes and bike racks. They called themselves Bike for a Better City. One rider held a sign that read, "The internal combustion engine is antiquated, obscene, and responsible for more deaths thru pollution and mayhem than even that great curse war." A few taxi-drivers razzed the protesters, and at one point an infiltrator, concerned that there were greater causes in need of pursuing, joined the cyclists' ranks, shouting, "People are being murdered and you protest bicycle lanes!"

Since 2000, according to a certain moral calculus, more than a hundred and twenty New York City bicyclists have been murdered—struck dead by automobiles—and another twenty thousand have been injured, by enemy car doors and steel-fortified taxicab fenders. Three were killed in the course of three weeks in June of this year, including one, Dr. Carl Nacht, who was felled by a police tow truck while riding with his wife along the Hudson River Greenway—an officially sanctioned bike path. Since 2004, about six hundred cyclists have been arrested while participating in monthly political-protest rides known as Critical Mass, most notably during the Republican National Convention, when scores were ensnared in nets, and later imprisoned, and their bikes were confiscated as "evidence."

New York is by no means a bicycle haven, like Copenhagen or Amsterdam, or even San Francisco or Madison, Wisconsin, where cycling, despite hilly terrain, is three times as common as it is here. But a smaller proportion of New York residents own automobiles compared with any large city in the Western world, and the local bicycling movement now includes more than twenty groups, with names like Right of Way, FreeWheels, and Revolution Rickshaws, drawing inspiration from sources as varied as the French Situationist philosopher Guy Debord, the civil-rights leaders John Lewis and Hosea Williams, and the urban sociologist Jane Jacobs. Their aims are at once specific (mandating bike storage at office buildings) and all-encompassing: Revolution Rickshaws, for instance, seeks in effect to create an entire pedal-based economy, offering "eco-responsible execution in people-moving services," "rapid urban cargo transport," and "outdoor marketing promotions," through the use of pedicabs, tricycle rigs capable of carrying a thousand pounds of freight, and towable billboards.

Their nominal constituency, the hundred and twenty thousand New Yorkers who ride bicycles every day, comprises three distinct types—commuters (book editors, say, wearing cargo pants), exercisers (lawyers in spandex), and messengers (streetwise minorities without health care)—whose agendas overlap only loosely. And, as with any growing movement, success has brought about factionalization. Roughly speaking, the bikers range, in their political leanings, from Hugo Chávez to Ned Lamont, and in methodology from anarchist street theatre to wonkish position papers. "I think a lot of people realize that this issue is really central to a lot of the dilemmas facing, you know, humanity right now," Paul Steely White, the executive director of Transportation Alternatives, said recently. "How are we going to deal with less oil? How are we going to make cities more sustainable, more livable?"

Transportation Alternatives, or T.A., represents the movement's big tent, with more than five thousand members, a staff of Ivy League graduates, and numerous allies in city government, whom the staff lobbies to enact bike-friendly legislation



The movement hopes to save the planet by creating bike lanes and overthrowing "car tyranny."

and other traffic-reducing measures, like express bus service and congestion pricing. White, who is thirty-six, and boyishly affable, was born into a Mormon family, and didn't discover the pleasures of the bike—"mankind's greatest invention"—until college, in Madison. When he left for graduate school, in Montana, his parents, who were by then living in Illinois, shipped his belongings via UPS, and he rode his Cannondale touring bike fifteen hundred miles. He now owns four bikes, including a beater that he leaves on the street, attached to a lamppost or a parking meter. He has let his driver's license expire.

"There's this perception that we're impeding the natural order of things," White told me, over a beer at the bar beneath the T.A. office, on West Twenty-sixth Street. (His employees are forbidden from storing more than one bike at a time.) "It's, like, 'Get a car. Grow up. Men drive cars.' You're somehow a clown or a kid if you're riding a bicycle." The week before, the N.Y.P.D., in a move widely understood to target Critical Mass, had announced new "parade rules" requiring all groups of twenty or more bicyclists, or thirty-five or more pedestrians, to seek a permit before assembling. On cycling blogs, riders were trading stories of being stopped by plainclothes officers while crossing the Brooklyn and Williamsburg Bridges, and charged with improbable offenses (in one case, for riding thirty-three m.p.h.—a pace faster than Lance Armstrong's). Steve Dunleavy, the longtime *Post* columnist, had just weighed in, siding with the cops and referring to cyclists as a cult of "pedal punks" and "kamikaze bike bullies." (In return, the blog commenters referred to *Post* readers as "large-vehicle driving meatheads," and asked people to consider "the auto-centric character of their Pocono real-estate section.")

In June, cycling advocates had lent their support to officials from the Department of Transportation who delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the largely black community board representing the neighborhoods of downtown Brooklyn, Fort Greene, and Clinton Hill, on the merits of adding five miles of bike lanes through the area. The presentation met with resistance—one man called bikers "thugs on two wheels"—and the board voted not to endorse the proposal. "They see cyclists as part of the gentrification wave," White said, almost apologetically. He lives in Park Slope.

"It's the next big fight," a biker who has been agitating to get cars permanently banned from the Central Park loop said recently. "I really think I'm doing God's work." He equated the current political moment with the nascent state of civil rights in the late nineteen-thirties. "Bicyclists are the niggers of New York," he said.

Critical Mass, according to its participants, is not a group but a recurring event. "An organized coincidence," one regular rider told me. "No, a *disorganized* coincidence—a 'happening,' a temporary reorganization of public space." (The coincidence is international: more than three hundred cities on six continents experience similar events.) Locally, there is no acknowledged leadership, and therefore no specified route, much to the chagrin of the police, who, from an operational standpoint, at least, would prefer chaperoning to chasing. Only the date (the last Friday of every month), the time (7 P.M.), and the starting point (Union Square) are known, and although these minimal guidelines must have originated with a

BEN KATCHOR

person, they have become ingrained in the collective cycling consciousness, like natural law. Sometimes someone brings a trumpet and plays a fanfare, and the assembled riders, if inspired, will set off in one direction or another, spreading from the park and into the city grid, rendering each street they enter momentarily impervious to through traffic. But no one wants to go first, and the scene in the square can begin to seem like the main event, with people handing out flyers and pamphlets for associated causes ("The Essential Truth About 9-11," "New York's First and Only Solar-Powered Film Festival").

In the months just before the Republican Convention, the number of participants in Critical Mass swelled into the thousands, but fear of being arrested and a kind of weariness—Paul White now views the event as "a puerile cat-and-mouse game with the cops"—have since shrunk the bike brigades. On the last Friday in July, shortly after the new parade rules had been announced, a few hundred people converged at the north end of Union Square, riding all manner of bikes: recumbent, collapsible, tall, small. Police vans and squad cars ringed the perimeter. Norman Siegel, the former executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, was on hand, likening Police Commissioner Ray Kelly's new restrictions to the Administration's restrictions on the rights of detainees at Gitmo—dual emblems, he felt, of extralegal executive power. "The bikers have basically thumbed their noses at the P.D.," Siegel said. "They're generally representative of New Yorkers—zany, a little rebellious, irreverent." A woman wearing an American flag, and not much else, rode her bike slowly toward a cluster of officers, and then doubled back. Others passed out buttons that read, "Please Don't Arrest Me—This is my permit." On closer examination, they were recycled pins made by the antiwar group United for Peace and Justice, with customized paper labels glued over "No Blood for Oil."

Bill DiPaola, the founder of Time's Up, an environmental organization that anchors the activist, theatrical wing of the cycling community, glanced around warily, sizing up the anti-insurgency forces. "We're definitely seeing more cars with blacked-out windows," he said. "We expect the usual hard-line unfriendliness." He added, "When I say 'we,' I mean Time's Up." (DiPaola is one of four people named in a suit filed by the city to stop Time's Up from promoting Critical Mass rides—arguing that they represent an official Critical Mass governing body.) Many protesters had armed themselves with recording equipment. "On this particular ride, there's a lot of helmet cams," DiPaola said. "I'd say there's at least thirty-five video cameras here, probably close to sixty-five digital cameras, at least thirty legal observers, and ten lawyers." He shrugged. "You know, there's very few people riding their bikes here. Most of the people are here to document this time in history."

The only guy in the crowd wearing a necktie turned out to be a lawyer, named Gideon Oliver, who said that he'd defended more than a hundred bikers who had been arrested in the past year and a half. He doesn't own a bike himself. "I'm terrified to ride in the city," he said.

A mustachioed police inspector named John Codiglia walked toward us. "Do you know if Jack Black is riding in this event?" he asked. "You see the gentleman with the gold mask over there?" He pointed to a short guy wearing a red-and-black cape, right out of "Nacho Libre." "That's Jack Black! I *know* it's him."

After Codiglia walked away, Oliver said, "He's the good cop." He pointed at a dozen or so helmeted officers perched on mopeds, forming a straight line along the eastern edge of the park, facing in. "The guys on scooters are the bad cops. I know so many of them from court. That one over there, he accused somebody of riding his bike with a hundred other people, 'perpendicular in the roadway,' blocking traffic. And I asked him on the stand, 'What's "perpendicular" mean?' He was, like, 'You got me.' "

I introduced myself to the masked man and asked his name. "NYMAAN," he said, pointing to his cape, which was adorned with the words "New York Metro Anarchist Alliance." He added, "I am an idea, not a person." (His outfit advertised a Web site that features the heading "Notes from the global intifada.") He rang the bell on his handlebar a couple of times, and began rolling his front tire back and forth. "You know what this means, right? I'm starting to get itchy."

A tall, middle-aged man with a striking blond mane approached on foot. "Hallelujah, the Devil!" he said, pointing at the caped biker. "I knew I'd meet the Devil eventually."

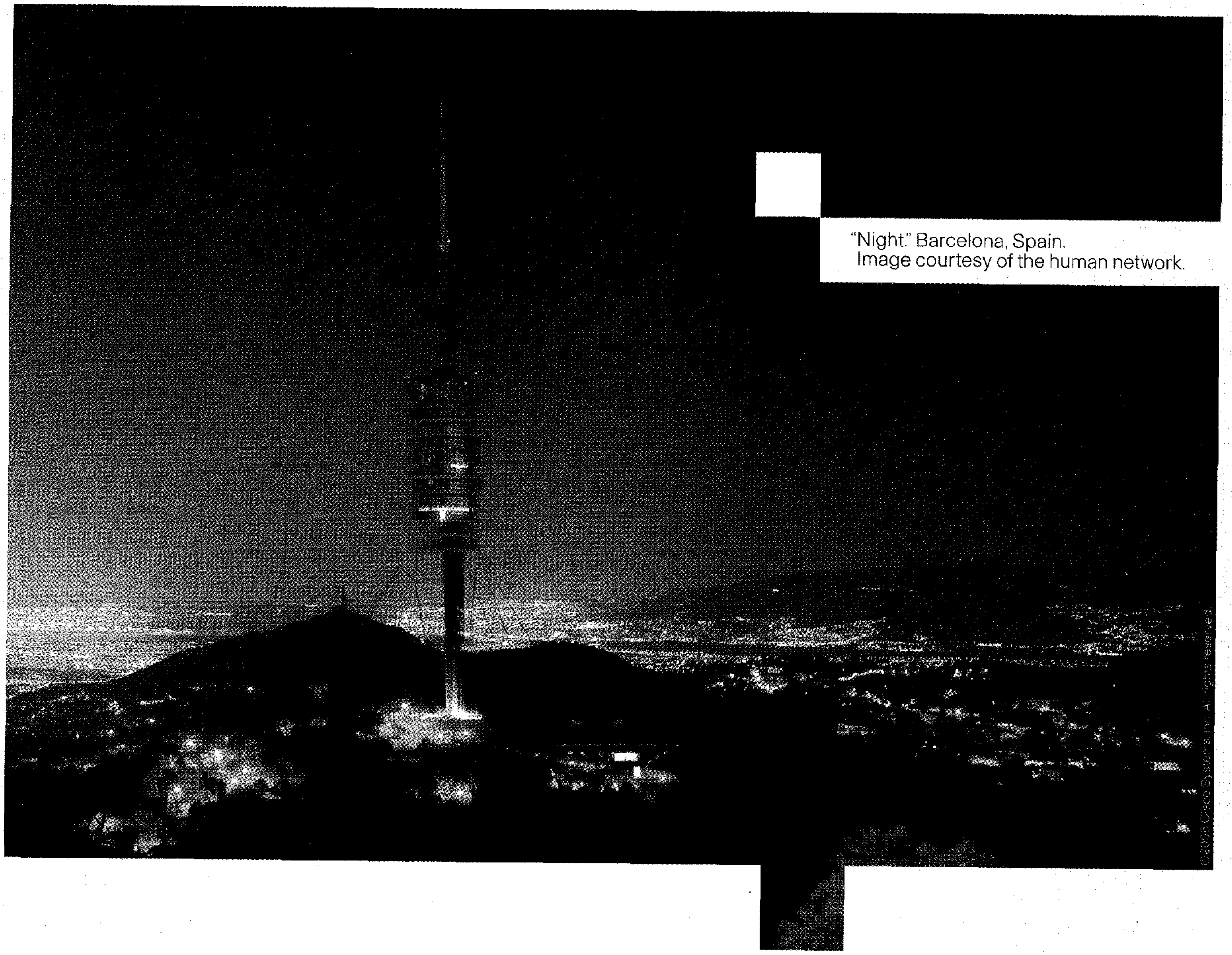
"No, I'm NYMAAN," the biker said.

The blond man was Bill Talen, a performance artist who goes by the name Reverend Billy and calls his congregation the Church of Stop Shopping. "One time, I was arrested at a Buy Nothing Day Parade," he said, recalling a distant Friday evening. "We went in and exorcised a Starbucks cash register, and, sure enough, I got thrown in the holding tank at Fifty-fourth Street. And the cops that arrested me were *really* upset that they were missing this." He opened his arms and turned, as though surveying his parish. "And I felt their erotic love of harassing the bicyclists. It was like they couldn't date their favorite girl."

An associate of the Reverend's, Michael O'Neill, the manager of the Church of Stop Shopping, soon joined the conversation. He, too, was on foot. "Community isn't recognized unless it's mediated through monetary transactions," he said. "And the idea of a leaderless community, my God, they don't even speak that language. I think this is all a pretext for pork-barrel N.Y.P.D. expenditures."

The sporadic jingling of bike bells gave way to a steady chime, which prompted the officers to start their engines, and the bicyclists began drifting out of the northwest corner of the park, along Seventeenth Street, followed by police scooters riding two by two. The deliberateness of the procession resembled a funeral cortege. "What this does, every month, every ride, every set of wheels on the road—we're trying to change the values of the city," O'Neill said.

The first bust occurred a block away, at the corner of Seventeenth and Fifth Avenue, where a young bearded man from Red Hook ignored a red light. As one of the detaining officers wrote a ticket, a blond woman who appeared to be in her forties observed that the cop's scooter was parked in the bike lane.

"Night." Barcelona, Spain.
Image courtesy of the human network.

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(Video footage later provided incontrovertible evidence that the cops had ridden their scooters across the sidewalk.) The woman was riding a child's bike, with a yellow license plate attached to the rear that read, "Bicycling: A Quiet Statement Against Oil Wars."

"You can go around it," the cop said, sounding beleaguered. "You'll fit."

A block and a half south, the woman noticed another bike-lane obstruction, this time a taxi. Policing cops was becoming her thing, and she accosted another officer: "You're supposed to give him a ticket."

"What's wrong? He's just dropping off passengers."

"It's illegal to be in the bike lane," she said.

"It's *illegal*?" he asked.

Matthew Roth, another of the Time's Up defendants, arrived at the scene, walking his bike along the curb. "Did you cite it?" he asked the woman. "It's 4-08, subsection E. Tell him to get out his R.C.N.Y."—Rules of the City of New York. "There's very little enforcement of traffic laws, because people don't know what they are," Roth said as he continued south on foot, using his palm to steady the seat of his bike. His knuckles bore the telltale scars of a New York City cycling career.

Tom Bernardin knows the traffic laws as well as anyone. In fact, he has often dreamed, while looking out his apartment window at midday, of sketching the intersection of Fourteenth Street and Seventh Avenue to document all the traffic violations he observes. "You know, like those line drawings from when you were a kid—'Circle everything that's wrong with this picture,' " he says. He has never encountered a Critical Mass rally ("I actually time my activities to avoid people as much as possible"), but he occasionally engages in his own kind of protest theatre, marching into a nearby noodle shop on Sixth Avenue to deliver what he calls "performance pieces," in which he complains loudly about civic transgressions.

Several years ago, Bernardin, who works as a freelance tour guide, started an anti-noise group called FANNY (Friends Against Noisy New York), but lately he has concluded that the problem is intractable. "Noise is the bastard child of the environmental movement," he says. His latest cause, which he announced in the winter, 2006, edition of the *Greenwich Village Block Association News*, is pedestrian safety, and by his reckoning the enemy is not S.U.V.s but Schwinns. "No doubt the most egregious assault on the lives of all New Yorkers in recent times is the relatively new phenomenon of sidewalk bicycling," he wrote. "Remember the sidewalks before the Pooper Scooper law? . . . Without the mayor, police commissioner, and media stepping up to the plate for this problem, perhaps, we all had better be prepared to continue to dodge these louts."

Bernardin's rant prompted a follow-up in the spring edition, entitled "Back to Bikes," with many more Village residents weighing in. Ostensibly, the piece was about the "problem" of bicycles, like Paul White's beater, that remain locked (or "leashed") to public street furniture for extended periods, cluttering the neighborhood. "Every time I round the corner on to Morton Street, the first thing I see is the bikes everywhere, rather than the tulips and daffodils," one man complained.

But others evidently perceived Manhattan bikes as akin to hybrid cars in Hollywood: conspicuous presumption. "They don't care how what they do affects others and you're not going to change their attitude," one resident said of bikers. "They're morally superior because they are not polluting the atmosphere."

The hierarchy of urban piety is ever delicate. Still another Villager, a biking enthusiast, railed against the unctuousness of the anti-bike pedestrians. "I'm tired of joggers using the bike path, getting in the way," he said. "They tell us to get off our bikes and jog because it's more environmentally sensitive. To them bikes are manufactured things. The metals that go into them are mined. And there's the plastic, too . . . made from oil."

STEVE DUENES

"Funnel?"

"The changes in the neighborhood are really disheartening," Bernardin said late one recent Friday morning, when I met him in front of his building for a tour of local cycling offenses. I had come prepared for a long walk, but Bernardin, who has a white beard and was wearing an untucked polo shirt, jeans, sneakers, and shades, seemed to think that stepping the twenty or so yards to the corner of Fourteenth Street would more than suffice. "I'm really aware of my environment when I'm in public," he said. "Between the front of the building and the curb"—he was suddenly distracted by the grating jangle of a passing motorcycle ("That's illegal: straight pipes")—"is a sacred space."

As Bernardin sees it, the Village has become an extended college campus for text-messaging, iPod-impaired young professionals who can't be bothered to cook or say hello in the elevator and the "hellions" who deliver them their takeout. Both groups share a habit of defiant, reckless bicycling that invades the sidewalk, threatening the elderly and the infirm. "They're very self-righteous, and they're angry," he said of bicyclists. "But you know what?" He jabbed his index finger toward the sidewalk three times in succession, and said, "This ain't broken." Then he thrust his arm out toward the street: "Fix *that.*" He stomped and pointed once more at the sidewalk. "But don't break *this.*"

Bernardin used to ride a bike, while

cataloguing bishop's-crook lampposts (for the Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture) and freestanding clock faces. (He is the founder of Save America's Clocks, an organization whose motto is "Non-working clocks betray the public trust and send out a message that *nobody's home*.") Then, about ten years ago, he was riding north on Sixth Avenue, "doing everything legal," he says, when another biker came tearing around the corner, "illegally," at Twenty-second Street and clipped him; he spilled, and barely missed having his head crushed by a passing car. The incident could be a Rorschach for civic activists. To a cycling advocate, what's salient is the fact that Bernardin was nearly killed by an automobile. Bernardin, however, saw two agents obeying the traffic laws—himself and the car driver—and a third who, by flouting them, introduced the element of danger.

"It sounds like a rattlesnake coming up behind you," he said, as he scanned the intersection for bikes. "The chain: *clickety-clack, clickety-clack*. I find it so selfish. If you hook up a blood-pressure machine to me, you'll see that it just spikes every time I hear that noise." So far, however, he'd seen only potential victims: "See this person with a cane, that woman with a stroller?" At last, a violator of the college-grad variety buzzed past us, disrupting the sacred space. "Bang! This guy right here," Bernardin said. "And here's another—the chicken guy." An Asian man on a rickety five-speed with a big basket in front had emerged from Dirty Bird, a restaurant on Fourteenth Street, and begun riding east along the sidewalk, swerving to avoid a few pedestrians who, judging from the upward, indecisive tilt of their heads, seemed to be tourists. The light turned red as the chicken guy reached the corner; he hadn't worked up enough speed to hazard a Frogger-like crossing, so he stopped short, his front tire nearly brushing up against a pair of teen-age girls. Bernardin stepped forward. "Do you know this is illegal?" he asked.

The man looked bewildered. The light changed, and he continued east in the crosswalk (which is also illegal), twice looking back over his shoulder at Bernardin, who had already moved on and begun reminiscing about his activist past. "I just have to be involved, doing stuff," he said. "It makes me a happier person if I'm concerned and doing things."

But the noise was getting to him. A bike swerved, causing a truck to brake (*screech*), and Bernardin's shoulders pinched, just as an accordion bus stopped to disgorge passengers (*hiss—beep! beep! beep!*), amid the usual chorus of horns and sirens. "And don't even get me started on cell phones," he said. "For me"—he turned his palms up and mimicked the scales of justice—"it's bubonic plague, cell phones, bubonic plague, cell phones." At that moment, a cyclist, heading south on Seventh Avenue, passed by with his right hand held to his ear. "Course, then you see the *real* jerks—bicycling *and* talking on cell phones," Bernardin said. "Who's getting satisfaction out of *that* conversation?"

Pedestrians are sinners, too. On occasions when Bernardin has had to rent a car, he has noticed that the street "turns into a funnel," owing not only to the jostling of the bikes, buses, and trucks but to all the impatient pedestrians "testing the waters," as he put it. "Look at these jerks here," he said, gesturing at the crosswalk, where pedestrians were edging out into street, waiting for the light to change. "I used to do that when I was a kid. I'm over that. I've learned to be a *good* pedestrian."

Across the street, the deliveryman from Dirty Bird was returning. He rode west, in the crosswalk, and then up onto the curb once more. Bernardin lit a cigarette as he contemplated confronting the restaurant's management, but, after inhaling deeply, thought better of it. "I don't need another enemy in the neighborhood," he said. He tossed his cigarette butt in the street and said that he planned to take a nap—with earplugs in, and the air-conditioning turned up. It was noon, and he'd been awake since five, when the garbage trucks began their daily rounds.

After a Critical Mass ride dissipates, the most committed riders often reassemble at 49 East Houston Street, where Time's Up has its headquarters, to compile on-the-spot video replays and add to the dossier of police brutality. (In May, a cyclist suffered a broken collarbone after a collision with the door of a police car.) Peter Meitzler, who is the treasurer of the New York City Pedicab Owners' Association, was among the twenty-seven people who received summonses during the July ride. "This is kind of like the empire's last couple of gasps, coming after the bikers," he said, while standing outside Time's Up, waiting for Bill DiPaola to unlock the door. "A couple of more power failures and I think the complete paradigm's going to change."

Inside, where tires hung overhead, as in a mechanic's garage, DiPaola led me to the refrigerator, which was covered with Polaroids of suspected undercover cops who'd been known to hang around biking events, as well as yellowing *Times* clips from a multipart series on domestic spying. (The most recent, from December 22, 2005, cited video evidence of covert N.Y.P.D. infiltration at a street vigil for a deceased cyclist.) A young man interrupted: "Where's the beer hidden?"

DiPaola eyed him and hesitated. "Uh, in the bathroom," he said. When the young man left, DiPaola turned to a Time's Up volunteer, Liane Nikitovich (nom de guerre: Nikita), who had surrounded herself with cameras and was attending to all the arriving documentary footage. "Who is that guy?" he asked.

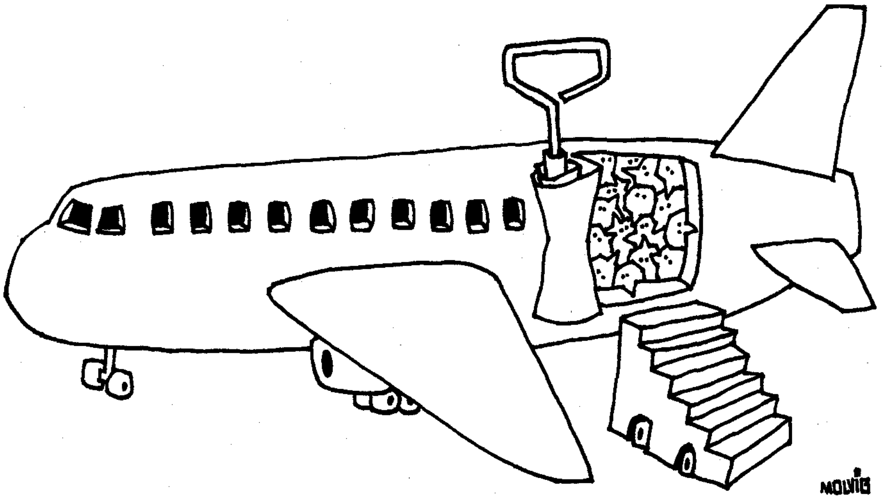
"I invited him," Nikita said. "He's a videographer."

A large television was placed on the end of a long table, and video footage was fed through in a continuous loop. There was the woman wearing the American flag—it flew up behind her like a cape as she picked up speed, exposing her naked back. In the East Village, riders were chanting in cadence, "More bikes, less cars!" Back again at a busy midtown intersection: one group stopped at a red light, dismounted, and lifted their bikes above their heads like trophies.

DiPaola was smiling, and seemed fully at ease for the first time all night. "You see the look on the cops' faces when people on the sidewalks cheer us?" he said. "They hate it."

Studies have shown that the surest way to make biking safer is to make it more popular—to increase visibility and awareness among motorists. ("You're like the Invisible Man out there," a biker told me.) To make it popular, it must be seen as fun. But riding in heavy traffic, while obeying all lights and signs, is not fun.

Paul White has been working on a cyclists' code of ethics for the members of Transportation Alternatives to sign, and, although he's sensitive to complaints about scofflaw cyclists, he's been very careful about the wording. "It doesn't say, 'Stop at



all red lights,' " he said. "Really, the heart of it is yielding to pedestrians. That's a low-hanging fruit for us. They're getting around under their own power, just like you." He took a sip of beer. "Sure, they jaywalk. Sure, they're oblivious sometimes. But, you know, give them a break."

Of course, some people's fun is another person's nightmare. The completion of the thirteen-mile greenway along the Hudson has inspired a great many people—five thousand, on a good day—to ride their bikes. According to Michael Smith, a veteran city cyclist, the new riders tend to wear spandex and helmets and go very fast, with a great sense of purpose, on expensive machines. Smith is a member of Right of Way, an organization "dedicated to the overthrow of car tyranny." On its Web site, he wrote, "Back when we were all fighting the cars on the street, I felt a certain sense of solidarity. But now that we've got this dedicated—or sorta dedicated—space, I'm finding out that a lot of us are, well, assholes . . . just like that Guido in the S.U.V. who nearly killed you on Sixth Avenue last week." Smith longed for a return of that "good, mutinous urban attitude" about cycling, where "we'd just laugh at the stoplights, and give the finger to the indignant, honking drivers. And we'd all feel like comrades or co-conspirators or something." The "drivers on bikes," as he called them, are really suburbanites in disguise. "Will they—please God!—move to fucking Scarsdale as soon as their kids are born?"

A few weeks ago, local bike-shop proprietors began noticing an uptick in flat tires, and it emerged that vandals, evidently sharing Smith's feelings about the would-be suburban speedsters, had been placing carpet tacks, like I.E.D.s, along the greenway between 137th Street and the George Washington Bridge.

Meanwhile, the Police Department, after withdrawing its initial parade restrictions in the face of public opposition, has announced a revised proposal that is not substantially different. (Transportation Alternatives sent out an e-mail bulletin to its members, contending that the department is "just playing with numbers.") A hearing has been set for November 27th, and cyclists, under the auspices of the Assemble for Rights Coalition, are planning a group ride from Union Square to One Police Plaza.

Not long ago, Tom Bernardin went to see his old friend Margot Gayle, to whom he paid tribute in "The Ellis Island Immigrant Cookbook," which he self-published in 1991, and in whose honor he defends the sidewalk. Gayle, at ninety-eight, is the last of the original preservationists; she helped bail Jane Jacobs out of jail, and led the fight to save the Jefferson Market Courthouse from demolition, putting together a committee that included E. E. Cummings and Lewis Mumford. For many years, she lived on West Ninth Street. She would walk a mile a day, dodging bikers and skateboarders and rollerbladers. ("She'd shake her cane at them," Bernardin told me.) Now mostly deaf and confined to a wheelchair, Gayle has made a few concessions to the gentrified, Bloombergian city: she lives in a high-rise apartment building on the Upper East Side and visits Starbucks every day.

Bernardin arrived carrying a bouquet of flowers. The walls of the apartment were covered with plaques and tributes: "Intractable Foe of Vandals and Rapacious Developers," "In Recognition of Successful Advocacy for Preservation," a framed letter from Bill Clinton.

"Do you still ride your bicycle?" she asked him.

"No, I was hit," he said. "I was on my bicycle, and another bicycle hit me and it knocked me down."

She reflected on her younger days, when she, too, was a rider. "They were very useful, and people enjoyed their bicycles very much," she said. "But too many automobiles—it's dangerous now."

Bernardin said that he thought the ramped indentations in the curb at corners were to blame. Gayle couldn't make out what he was saying, so he wrote it on an index card: "I think curb cuts are the problem."

She looked alarmed. "You do? Why?"

He made a wavy gesture with his hand, and said, "They go right up on the sidewalk."

"But of course I like them, being in a wheelchair."

"Well, that's why they're there," he conceded. "That's the good part of them." (Sidewalk bicycling—the bane of the elderly and disabled—did not become epidemic until the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, in 1990.)

Gayle complained some more about automobile traffic: "It spoils the air and endangers pedestrians and people with baby carriages." They talked about Washington Square Park ("It's all N.Y.U.—they just want it for themselves," Bernardin said), and about the Yorkville clock, nearby, which Gayle had helped Bernardin restore. "I'm worried about that clock now," she said. "They're building a big building a block away—excavating."

Bernardin promised to check on it. As he was leaving, she handed him two postcards to mail on his way out. One read, "Save the Graving Dock," and featured a picture of a dormant shipyard in Red Hook. The other called for preservation of the former Domino sugar refinery in Williamsburg.

"She is the role model of all time," Bernardin said in the elevator. "She never took a cab." ♦

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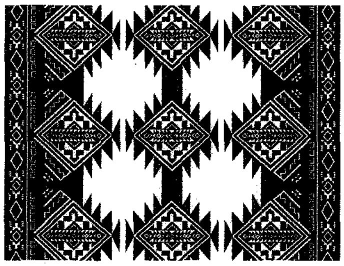

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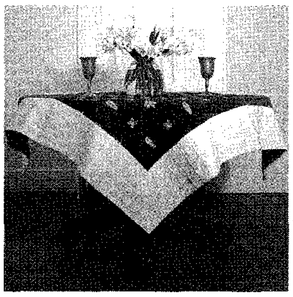

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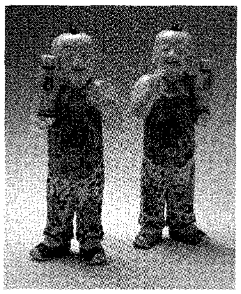

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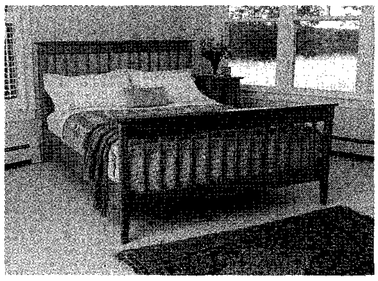

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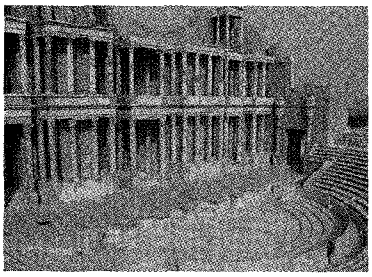

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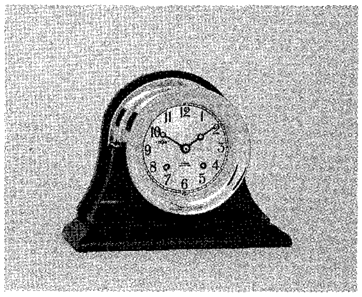

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DOWNPAGING

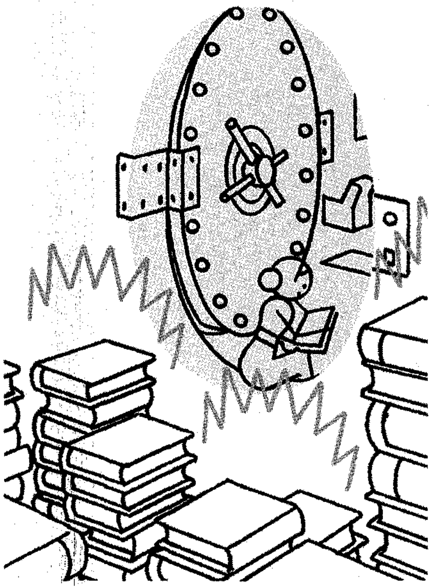
BY IAN FRAZIER

> Check books out of the library instead of buying them.... New releases of hard-cover novels cost $25 and more these days. If you buy just two a month, that's *$600 a year.*
>
> —*From "Ten Sure Ways to Trim Your Budget," in the News.*

Polk Benham, St. Marys, Ohio: "Right now, it's costing me forty-five dollars to fill up my 4Runner, which is about two novels. Tough decisions are going to have to be made. I'm used to having a newly released hardcover on the dash of my vehicle, another in the back seat for the kids. At home, we've got a novel in each bedroom, two in the family room, one in the laundry room for my wife when she's down there, and a novella in the john. We go through a couple of dozen novels in a year without even noticing. I hate to say it, but this can't go on."

Mrs. Louise Rodgers, Eau Claire, Wisconsin: "I never owned brand-new hardcovers when I was a girl, and now I want my twin sixteen-year-old boys to enjoy opportunities I didn't have. My boys are like any American teenagers, in that they eat, sleep, and breathe novels. And they don't want the three-dollar used paperback version, either. It's got to be new, mint, original dust jacket, the works. How do you tell a youngster that he can't have that just-released Modern Library edition of the complete Sinclair Lewis he's been dreaming of? But I guess that's what I'm going to have to do; I don't see any other option."

Jules Amthor, Torrance, California: "Let me give you a hypothetical situation: I'm walking down the street, I pass a bookstore, and they have a little table out front with some of the latest novels. I pick one up. The jacket says it's about a male professor of writing who has an affair with a much younger female student. I leaf through the book, and I come across a sentence about the student, who is also very beautiful, sleeping in the passenger seat of a car that the narrator (the professor) is driving, and the student wakes, and stretches, and looks at the professor, and—here's the part that gets me—*the pattern of the car-seat upholstery is still imprinted on her cheek.* Well, there's simply no way I'm not going to buy that book. I can be dead broke, nothing left on the credit cards—doesn't matter. And that's what happens to me, over and over again."



LAURENT CILLUFFO

Mitch Gelman, West Hempstead, New York: "As an accountant, the first thing I tell my clients is 'Get a library card!' Otherwise, you're too subject to temptation, and liable to find yourself in over your head. Few people know that the leading cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States is the 'Clan of the Cave Bear' novels. You overspend on one, and, just when you begin to dig yourself out, the next installment comes along. Public libraries began during the Depression as a government measure against this very problem. They're there for our protection, so we should use them."

Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Alabama): "If every American back in 1950 had quit buying novels and invested money in high-yield bonds, today we would be looking at a savings surplus of several trillion dollars, and Social Security would not be in the mess it's in. Instead, we know what happened—most of the money wound up in the pockets of one unscrupulous novelist, Pearl S. Buck, with the disastrous consequences of which we are too well aware. The fact that that woman never spent a day in jail is a disgrace to the history of our nation. I would ask every American, before you lavish your next paycheck on expensive novels you may not need, consider the other spending choices available. You could expand your cable service, visit a casino, make a political donation, give to a faith-based concern, or put the money in something the brokers call a flort. I think we all know a little bit better how our earnings should be spent than the average novel-writer does."

Ms. Mabel Dodge Luhan (dec'd), Taos, New Mexico: "Our wasteful consumer society buys, reads, and discards more brand-new hardcover fiction in a single day than the rest of the industrial world combined. I find that statistic staggering."

Parker (Chick) Tones, Sanibel Island, Florida: "As a man greatly favored by fortune, I can tell you the secret of my success in a single word: bookmarks. Everybody's gotta have 'em, someone's gotta make 'em and sell 'em. Understanding that simple economic reality just a tick ahead of my rivals brought me wealth, position, and power. Currently, however, I am very glad to be out of the business and retired. People don't seem to care where they start or stop in a book nowadays, so long as they're reading. They'll mark their place with just their thumb, a magazine blow-in ad, a piece of string. And the minute they finish one novel they toss it aside and start another. I've seen people on the freeway flip through a novel to the dénouement, read it, and throw the book out the window. Then they'll swing by a bodega, buy a new novel or two or a dozen, and be on their way. No one bothers to pick up the old novels, so they're scattered all over, as we know, backing up in storm drains. The excess of it appalls me."

Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Bank, St. George, Bermuda: "If I may, I would like to return for a moment to the topic of the financial instrument known colloquially as a flort, which was mentioned earlier, because I feel it was insufficiently explained. The term 'flort' is simply a shortened form of FLORT, which is an acronym for a much longer and more complex phrase involving entire words. A flort, in essence, is a type of non-available annuity whereby a depositor, or several, makes a predetermined contribution every year with the expectation that they will either get it back or not. Usually the latter is the case, in which case, fine. They did not have that much anyway, and no one but them is out anything. In certain instances, however, something else happens, which is that the flort value actually doubles or even quadruples, like Greenspan's did. As if he needed it! There's a guy with the dough! Cheney, too. Plus all the senators—man, are they in the chips! And you know what you never see any of the big-bucks guys do? Buy novels. They learned their lesson, disciplined themselves when they were young. The super-ultra-wealthy never touch the modern novel, thus racking up more than six hundred extra dollars per year, on top of what they're making already. Well, they're not like everybody. . . . Now I forget what I was talking about before. Oh, yeah—florts. Thank you."

Melissa S., Manhattan: "Eventually, I was able to cut back on novels to one a month, then half a novel, then just a few pages. As of this week, I have not looked at a novel (except from the library) for eighteen months, knock wood. For the first time, I'm learning what it is to live within a budget. At the end of the month, I'm always surprised to find a positive balance in my checking account—it's nice. Little by little, I've reacquainted myself with my TV. There have been some innovations in the formats of reality shows that I had known nothing about. Every morning now I make it a point to get dressed and go outside. I'm paying more attention to my hair. If I hadn't happened to pick up that copy of the *News* that day, I don't know where I'd be." ♦

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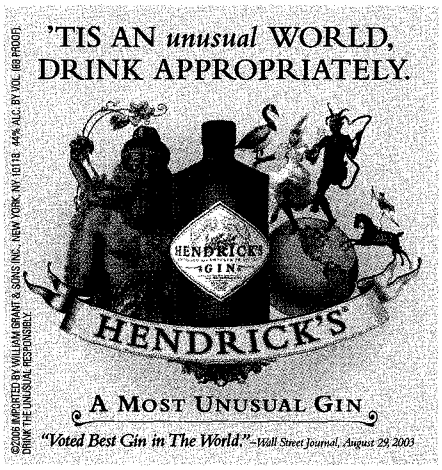
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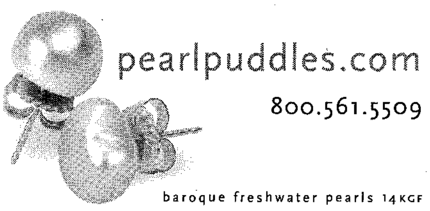
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LIFE AND LETTERS

STRANGERS IN PARADISE

How Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas got to Heaven.

BY JANET MALCOLM

In "Wars I Have Seen" (1945), her memoir of the Second World War, Gertrude Stein writes of the remarkable kindness of a young Frenchman named Paul Genin, the owner of a silk factory in Lyons and a country neighbor, who came to her after America entered the war and asked if she needed money. She did—the funds from America on which she and Alice B. Toklas depended no longer arrived—and he offered her a matching monthly stipend. Stein and Toklas lived on Genin's kindness for six months, after which Stein sold a Cézanne ("quite quietly to some one who came to see me") and no longer needed money. "And so I thanked Paul Genin and paid him back and he said if you ever need me just tell me, and that was that."

Toklas in the Rue de Fleurus in 1922. Photograph by Man Ray.

MAN RAY TRUST / ARS, NY / ADAGP, PARIS

Stein goes on to reflect, "Life is funny that way. It always is funny that way, the ones that naturally should offer do not, and those who have no reason to offer it, do, you never know you never do know where your good-fortune is to come from."

There is another story illustrating life's funniness that Stein might have told in "Wars I Have Seen." In July, 2003, a few weeks after this magazine published an article about Stein and Toklas's experiences in wartime France, an accusatory letter appeared in its letters column. The letter cited the infamous Gestapo raid on an orphanage in the village of Izieu in which forty-four Jewish children between the ages of four and seventeen and their seven supervisors were seized and ultimately shipped to death camps. The orphanage, the correspondent wrote, was "not far from Stein and Toklas's house in Culoz," and, "in the light of this history, Stein's comment in 'Wars I Have Seen' about becoming frightened only after the American soldiers arrived and she began 'hearing what had been happening to others' is somewhat hard to believe." I spoke to the Stein scholars Ulla Dydo and Edward Burns about the troubling question this letter raised, and they suggested that I write to someone in Paris who might be able to answer it. This was Paul Genin's stepdaughter, Joan Chapman, who had been in close touch with Stein and Toklas at the time of the Izieu raid and would be apt to know what they knew or didn't know. I wrote to Joan Chapman and received this reply:

> No, we had no idea that a group of Jewish children were hidden in a boarding school at Izieu, they were indeed deported, we only found out months later. I'm sure Gertrude and Alice had no idea of the incident at the time. Izieu is about 20 K from Belley and 30 K from Culoz. In those days the only way of getting to and fro was walking or on a bike, people were pretty isolated from each other. Anything confidential was never mentioned by phone.

Joan Chapman went on to tell this story:

> One day about that time my mother was asked by someone who ran an orphanage for Spanish Republican children refugees, to hide the only Jewish child in her care. His name was Manfred Iudas, he was 5 years old, he was German, he only spoke Spanish! As a matter of course Gertrude came over to make his acquaintance, he was a charming, beautiful child. After a month or so my mother had grown very fond of him and she decided to adopt him. Gertrude was consulted and she said no you can't do that, he must be adopted by a Jewish family, I cannot remember quite how that was managed but it was.

The story chills the blood and more than confirms the view that Stein did not behave well in the Second World War. To propose that a Jewish child be sent to a Jewish family at a time when everywhere in France Jews were being rounded up was an act of almost inconceivable callousness. Ulla Dydo and Edward Burns agreed that Stein's advice was inexplicable and terrible. We imagined together the tragic fate of the beautiful little boy.

A year later, when Joan Chapman was visiting America, I met with her and questioned her about the incident of the Jewish child. As we talked—as more details about the incident emerged—the story changed. As its bare bones took on flesh, Stein's interference no longer damned her. The writer of the accusatory letter had dated the Izieu raid April 6, 1943, but in fact it took place on April 6, 1944, four months before France was liberated. Joan Chapman assured me that Stein's advice had not put Manfred Iudas's life at risk; the child went to the Jewish family only after Liberation, when Jews were no longer in danger. Joan Chapman had not realized that her laconic account could be read as a condemnation of Stein. She assumed that we knew what she knew.

The instability of human knowledge is one of our few certainties. Almost everything we know we know incompletely at best. And almost nothing we are told remains the same when retold. When Joan Chapman, who is an attractive and vigorous woman of eighty, with an excellent memory, retold the story of Manfred Iudas, she said that a second child had come with him from the orphanage, an older, non-Jewish boy. She did not remember why this boy came—perhaps to keep Manfred company? She couldn't say. The second boy exemplified the fat we cut off when we compose a lean narrative. Under my questioning, Joan Chapman told the story of the Jewish boy as a story of regret for herself and her mother, Nena.

"He was adorable," she said. "He was very bright. And he looked uncannily like a nephew of my mother's. My mother and Paul couldn't have children. He would have been a wonderful boy for them to have. And I would have been very pleased to have a brother. I regretted him. I regretted him for a long time."

Joan Chapman told me how her family became acquainted with Stein and Toklas. Her mother, leafing through the local telephone directory, was astonished to see the name Gertrude Stein. She called Stein's number and Stein answered the phone. "Are you Gertrude Stein?" Nena asked. "Yes." "Are you *the* Gertrude Stein?" "Yes." Nena told Stein that she had just moved into the neighborhood and Stein said, "I'll be right over." Stein barely mentions Nena and Joan in "Wars I Have Seen." We know from "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas" (1933)—Stein's book about herself written in the voice of Toklas—that Stein's interest in young men (Paul Genin was in his mid-thirties at the time of his loan) did not extend to their wives. At her gatherings in the Rue de Fleurus, she assigned Alice to sit with them. "Before I decided to write this book my twenty-five years with Gertrude Stein, I had often said that I would write, The wives of geniuses I have sat with. I have sat with so many," Stein mischievously wrote. However, in the case of the Genins Stein did not favor Paul over his wife. Joan Chapman remembers being jealous of Stein's attention to her mother: "She liked me, but she liked my mother more. Gertrude was like the sun—very warm. I adored her. She had a beautiful face. She had beautiful brown eyes, she had lovely hands. She was much better-looking than Alice, who was hideous. Alice was all sort of spiky. She looked like a witch. She had this mustache. Alice was not warm and welcoming, not as nice as Gertrude. I remember feeling that Alice had another look on us. She didn't need people the way Gertrude did. Gertrude needed to see us because it fed her art. She never invented anything, apparently. We saw her three or four times a week when they lived in Bilignin. When they moved to Culoz, it was once a week. After the war, we hardly saw them. Gertrude was lionized by all those people."

"She dropped you?"

"Yes. You must understand, she was suddenly in the midst of all those people arriving and making a fuss over her. Those wonderful people. We weren't very interesting, were we?"

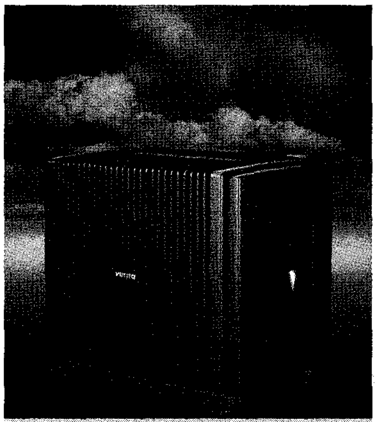
"Did you mind?"

"Oh, yes. I think my mother did very much. But Paul now says, 'Well, *c'est normal.* Gertrude saw us because she was bored—she had to see somebody.'"

Paul Genin is ninety-eight and still owns property near Bilignin.

Joan Chapman returned to the subject of the Jewish boy. "My mother talked to Gertrude about it and Gertrude said, 'No way. He's a Jewish child and has to be adopted by Jewish parents.' It was an extraordinary thing to say because Gertrude was not a practicing Jew."

But, given that the child's safety was not at stake, it was not such an extraordinary thing for Stein—or for any Jew (practicing or non-practicing)—to say. As one of Isaac Bashevis Singer's characters puts it, "The whole point of Jewishness is isolation." Stein kept her Jewishness out of her work and out of her public persona, but she never abjured it. When she was twenty-two, she wrote a paper for a Radcliffe writing class in "argumentative composition" entitled "The Modern Jew Who Has Given Up the



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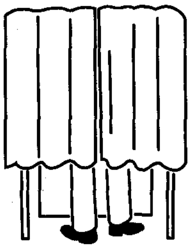
Faith of His Fathers Can Reasonably and Consistently Believe in Isolation." "Isolation means no intermarriage with an alien," the young Stein wrote, and went on, "The Jew shall marry only the Jew. He may have business friends among the Gentiles, he may mix with them in their work and in their pleasures, he will go to their schools and receive their instructions, but in the sacred precincts of the home, in the close union of family and of kinsfolk he must be a Jew with Jews; the Gentile has no place there." Fifty years later, she had evidently not changed her views; her horror at the idea of a Jewish boy living out his childhood in a Gentile home is of a piece with them.

At the end of the paper, Stein writes, "So long as the Jews keep themselves isolated so long are they bound to be subject to persecution to a greater or less extent. We must ask whether they gain enough by this exclusion to make it worth while to be in this attitude of separateness and persecution. Yes. I think they do!" The compensation, she writes, is the unbreakable bond between Jews everywhere:

> Ask any Israelite no matter how liberal, no matter how numerous and intimate are his Christian friends; ask him to tell you to whom he would rather appeal if he were in any need either spiritual or material, whether he would rather go to a perfect stranger a Jew or to his most intimate Christian friend and without hesitation he will reply, "To the Jew every time."

On this point the young and the mature Stein do not agree. The mature Stein would go to the Christian every time. Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Carl Van Vechten, Thornton Wilder, Ernest Hemingway, Bernard Faÿ, W. G. Rogers, Francis Rose—her great friends (and ultimately, in some cases, great enemies) were goyim. We know of no Jew to whom Stein turned in spiritual or material need. To be sure, her "marriage" was to a Jew, and she remained close to the family of her oldest brother, Michael. But the world she describes in "The Autobiography" is as far from the world of Isaac Singer as one can come. As she grew into her role of modernist genius, the "Jewish question" seems to have faded from her consciousness; the vehemence of her reaction to Nena's wish to adopt Manfred Iudas was a piece of momentary atavism.



But what do we know? Perhaps Stein had a secret Jewish life. Biography and autobiography are the aggregate of what, in the former, the author happens to learn, and, in the latter, he chooses to tell. A cache of letters between Stein and a rabbi may be discovered that will cast a whole new light on Stein's Jewish identity. Such discoveries are a regular inconvenience of the biographical enterprise.

A rabbi, as it happens, has unexpectedly turned up in Alice Toklas's biography. He is casually mentioned in a 1997 memoir by the Polish-born opera singer Doda Conrad, who lived and worked in Paris, and befriended Toklas in the last period of her life. Conrad writes of his chance encounter with Toklas in the early nineteen-fifties:

> Waiting in line in front of a cinema on the Avenue de l'Opéra to attend the presentation of Marc Allégret's film about André Gide (to which I had been invited), I found myself standing behind an odd little woman. I recognized Alice B. Toklas by her inimitable floppy hat with ostrich feathers, her stunning yellow sandals, her gendarme-like whiskers, and all the rest. She looked lost, with her invitation, and seemed not to know which ticket booth to go to. I offered to help her, but did not reveal that I had recognized her in order not to upset her.

After the film, as Conrad helps her find a taxi, Toklas introduces herself and says, "Your name must be Doda, because you look surprisingly like the singer Doda Conrad." He goes on, "Flattered that she had recognized me, I was even more enchanted to have met her." A week later, Conrad comes to tea at Toklas's elegant apartment at 5 Rue Christine. He rhapsodizes over the modernist masterpieces that entirely fill the walls of the salon, the luxe silver tea service, the dainty sandwiches and pâtisseries, the "atmosphere of exquisite hospitality." Then he writes:

> We immediately became friends, and she took me into her confidence, as if Alice had discovered in me someone with whom she could speak as an equal, which it appeared she had been unable to do for a long time. She told me about her trips to Poland, when she was a child, to visit her paternal grandfather. This grandfather was the rabbi of Ostrow, a small city near Kalisz, the cradle of the Tykociner, who were my ancestors. The rabbi's son had emigrated to San Francisco in the middle of the last century, where he had married a small Spanish Jewess, a great beauty. Alice described the elegance of the excursions the rabbi organized for her when she was a child.

When Toklas wrote her autobiography, "What Is Remembered" (1963), she had evidently forgotten the rabbi of Ostrow. She writes of a trip to Poland to visit her paternal grandparents but fails to identify the grandfather as a rabbi. The words "rabbi" and "Jew" are entirely absent from the autobiography. Toklas's un-Jewishness is one of her signatures. When a young Californian named Roland Duncan interviewed her in 1952 and cautiously approached the subject of Stein's Jewishness, he was smartly slapped on the wrist:

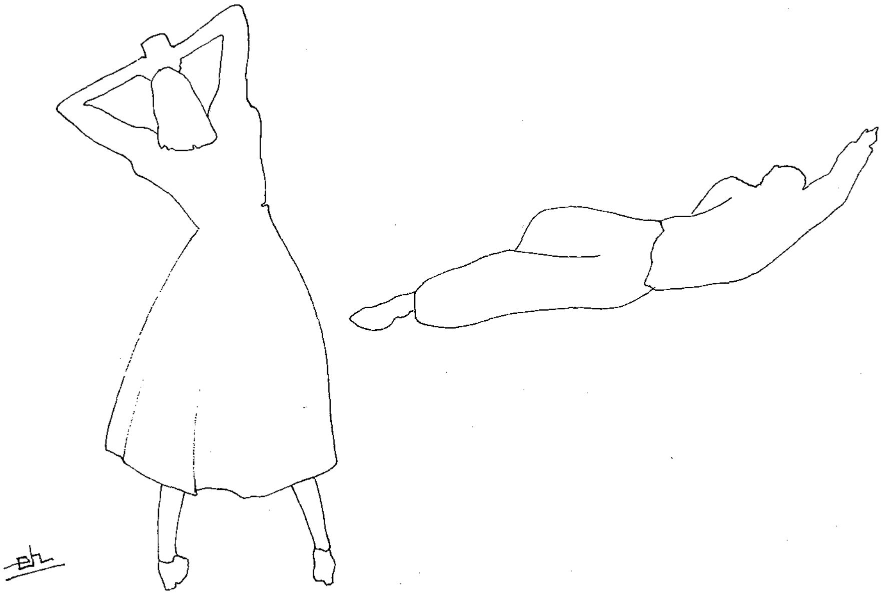
> DUNCAN: Do you think possibly that [Stein] felt that there was any cultural or religious minority which would have set her apart—
>
> TOKLAS: No.
>
> DUNCAN: —perhaps made her strive toward certain social or cultural objectives? None at all?
>
> TOKLAS: Never. We never had any feeling of any minority. We weren't the minority. We represented America.

When Toklas became a Catholic, in 1957, she went so far as to characterize the conversion not as a repudiation of Judaism but as a return to the Church. She told the writer Janet Flanner, in all seriousness, that she had been baptized in childhood when a Catholic friend of her parents sprinkled her with holy water. Flanner was also privy to Toklas's remarkable idea that she would be reunited in Heaven with Stein, who, as a genius, had been spared the fate of her fellow plain-dead Jews and was waiting for her there. (The non-genius Toklas had to make do with the mechanisms for eternal life open to ordinary observant Catholics.) Doda Conrad, Virgil Thomson, Donald Sutherland, and other friends of Toklas's old age have also reported this rigmarole.

Toklas's acknowledgment of her Jewish roots to Doda Conrad may be an example of the bonding that Stein celebrated in her paper on Jewish isolation. To a Jewish stranger, Toklas could say what she wouldn't say to her Christian friends—and to the readers of her autobiography, whom she imagined as goyim.

Linda Simon, in her "Biography of Alice B. Toklas," establishes, through archival research, that Toklas's father, Ferdinand, married a woman from a German Jewish family named Emma Levinsky. So where does that leave the small Spanish Jewess? And whose invention is she? Ulla Dydo and Edward Burns often spoke of Toklas as a liar. When I asked them to give me examples of her lies, they were at a loss, but adhered to their conviction of her untruthfulness. Doda Conrad's veracity is unknown to me. There is no doubt, however, that he and Janet Flanner were the chief support of Toklas in the sad final years of her life. Conrad wrote to Burns in 1971 of "the strange, inexplicable Alice B. Toklas episode, a fleeting moment in my life." He went on, "What induced me to 'take over,' as I did, after she broke her hipbone, early in 1964, was mainly the fact that nobody really made a move to do something. All her old friends (except Janet Flanner) were delighted and relieved to have the outsider Doda Conrad step in for them. (They sent checks, of course.). . .

"I marvel at the extent to which I got involved," Conrad wrote. "I truly took fait et cause for someone I did not really know and, probably, did not really like."



Left to Doze on the Veranda, He Fails to See His Wife Swallow the Elixir of Life He Was Saving for Himself.

In her last years, Toklas sank into poverty; what Doda Conrad "took over" with Janet Flanner was the horrible tangle of Toklas's finances and the task of soliciting money from her friends to keep her (barely) afloat. Toklas's financial difficulties derived from Gertrude Stein's will. Stein did and didn't provide for her "wife" of forty years.

Stein wrote her will on July 23, 1946, after she had had a diagnosis of stomach cancer and was awaiting the useless surgery that ended her existence. She left her money and her collection of paintings to Toklas—but only for "her use for life"—a momentary stop on the way to their true destination: Stein's nephew Allan, the only son of Michael Stein. Was this devotion to kin an object of Stein's never quite extinguished Jewishness? Or was it a mere expression of the deeply ingrained belief, shared by Christian and Jew alike, that money has to stay in the family? In "The House of the Seven Gables," Nathaniel Hawthorne wonderfully describes this conviction:

> But there is no one thing which men so rarely do, whatever the provocation or inducement, as to bequeath patrimonial property away from their own blood. They may love other individuals far better than their relatives—they may even cherish dislike, or positive hatred, to the latter—but yet, in view of death, the strong prejudice of propinquity revives, and impels the testator to send down his estate in the line marked out by custom, so immemorial that it looks like nature.

Stein disliked Allan but still felt impelled to make him her heir. As it turned out, he died before Toklas did, and next in line were his three children, Daniel, from his first marriage, and Michael and Gabrielle, from his second. The first wife, Yvonne, plays no role in Toklas's biography; the second, Roubina (Toklas called her the Armenian), plays a large one. Stein's collection of modernist paintings—acquired for not much money in the first decades of the twentieth century—had become valuable. In her will Stein wrote, "In so far as it may become necessary for [Toklas's] proper maintenance and support, I authorize my Executors to make payments to her from the principal of my Estate, and, for that purpose, to reduce to cash any paintings or other personal property belonging to my Estate." This would seem to take care of Toklas very nicely. But it didn't.

Wills are uncanny and electric documents. They lie dormant for years and then spring to life when their author dies, as if death were rain. Their effect on those they enrich or disappoint is never negligible, and sometimes unexpectedly charged. They thrust living and dead into a final fierce clasp of love or hatred. But they are not written in stone—for all their granite legal language—and they can be bent to subvert the wishes of the writer. Such was the case with Stein's will. The painting collection did not maintain and support Toklas in her fragile old age; in fact, in April, 1961, while she was away at a spa in Italy taking a mud cure for arthritis, it was seized from her apartment. The Armenian, claiming that the paintings were not safe during Toklas's absence, had received legal authority to remove them to a vault in the Chase Manhattan Bank in Paris; when Toklas returned to the apartment, she found only their outlines on the walls.

In two pieces in this magazine—one in 1961 and the other in 1975—Janet Flanner traced a line leading from Stein's will to Roubina's brutal act. According to Flanner, much of Toklas's trouble stemmed from Stein's decision, "on sound tax counsel," to place her estate under the jurisdiction of the probate court in Baltimore, and to the court's appointment of a man named Edgar Allan Poe (the poet's great-nephew) to administer it. (Stein named Toklas and Allan Stein executors, but for reasons no longer known they renounced or were forced to renounce this role, and Poe took over.)

"Gertrude had been precise about how her funds were to be spent, but, unaccountably, Poe proved to be an obstructionist and parsimonious in fulfilling her wishes, of which he seemed to disapprove, although it was none of his business," Flanner wrote in her piece of December, 1975. As well as providing for Toklas, Stein had provided for her own literary immortality: "I desire my Executors hereinafter named to pay to Carl Van Vechten, of 101 Central Park W., New York City, such sum of money as the said Carl Van Vechten shall, in his own absolute discretion, deem necessary for the publication of my unpublished manuscripts." Flanner suggests that it was Poe's dilatoriness both in funding the publication of Stein's unpublished work and in sending Toklas her monthly personal allowance of four hundred dollars that drove her to the rash act that precipitated the seizure of the paintings. "Alice cajoled and threatened," Flanner writes. "Poe sent money in driblets, and in 1954 Alice, who was desperate, finally sold about forty Picasso drawings without informing Poe." When Roubina—who was keeping "a beady eye upon the pictures in the interests of her minor children"—discovered that the drawings were gone, she began the legal proceedings that ended in the raid on the apartment. In a letter of 1965, Daniel Stein (for all that he would be a beneficiary of his stepmother's interventions) wrote of Roubina with exuberant malice: she "has always been a devious, hypocritical, and thoroughly unprincipled being willing to stop at nothing to achieve her ends, whatever they were. She is something between a Mexican bandit and one of those Egyptian infiltrators who used to cross over into Israel and murder the children of the kibbutzim in their beds."

The minor characters of biography, like their counterparts in fiction, are less tenderly treated than major characters. The writer uses them to advance his narrative and carelessly drops them when they have performed their function. Look at how I have used poor Roubina! Unlike the flat characters of fiction (as E.M. Forster called them), who have no existence outside the novel they were invented to ornament, the flat characters of biography are actual, three-dimensional people. But the biographer is writing a life, not lives, and, to keep himself on course, must cultivate a kind of narcissism on behalf of his subject that blinds him to the full humanity of anyone else. As he turns the bracing storylessness of human life into the flaccid narrativity of biography, he cannot worry about the people who never asked to be dragged into his shaky enterprise.

One of the notable features of "The Autobiography of Alice B.Toklas" is Stein's high-handed treatment of the lesser people in her circle. She flattens them as perhaps no biographer has ever flattened a character before or since. Stein was both happy about and a little ashamed of the success of "The Autobiography." It was the only one of her works that she made any money from, and she distinguished it from her unprofitable works by calling it an "audience" work, as opposed to the hermetic writings that she considered her real work. By writing in Toklas's voice, Stein made herself speak a more conventional English than the English she speaks in the hermetic works, but what the audience liked about the book wasn't merely that it could understand it. The audience recognized that it had been given something truly original—the work is as advanced and experimental, as wild and subversive as the most advanced and experimental and wild and subversive of Stein's works. It is—among the other things it is—an anti-biography. Stein's presentation of herself in the book as one of the world's greatest geniuses, and of every other person as someone put on earth only to amuse or irritate her, is surely a reflection not of the way she saw herself and her friends but of the way she thought about biographical representation. Early in the book, she writes of a servant named Hélène who worked for Stein and her brother Leo in the early days of the Rue de Fleurus salon:

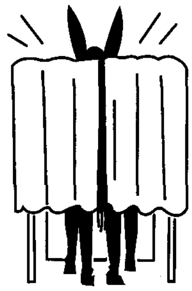
> Hélène stayed with the household until the end of 1913. Then her husband, by that time she had married and had a little boy, insisted that she work for others no longer. To her great regret she left and later she always said that life at home was never as amusing as it had been at the rue de Fleurus. Much later, only about three years ago, she came back for a year, she and her husband had fallen on bad times and her boy had died. She was as cheery as ever and enormously interested. She said isn't it extraordinary, all those people whom I knew when they were nobody are now always mentioned in the newspapers, and the other night over the radio they mentioned the name of Monsieur Picasso.

Stein's heartlessness ("and her boy had died") is like the heartlessness of Hilaire Belloc's "Cautionary Tales for Children." The author of "Three Lives" isn't really indifferent to the agony of a mother who has lost her son. But she is not writing "Three Lives"; she is writing a book about how amusing life around Gertrude Stein is. The heartlessness is essential to the amusement the reader

"Just so you know, you've got a lot of really rare specimens preserved here."

feels as he is propelled along the stream of Stein's grotesque gaiety and egotism. Every day brings satisfaction. And every character is a foil for Stein's ultra-importance. No one escapes diminishment. Even fellow-geniuses like Picasso do not quite reach the pinnacle where Stein placidly sits, but hover a little below it. "Now listen! I'm no fool," Stein once said in reply to a student's question about her line "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose." "I know that in daily life we don't go around saying 'is a . . . is a . . . is a . . .' Yes, I'm no fool; but I think that in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years." Yet Stein's boastfulness never got in the way of her understanding of human insignificance. As a child, she had looked at the night sky and recoiled from astronomy's insult. "It was frightening when the first comet I saw made it real that the stars were worlds and the earth only one of them," she wrote in "Everybody's Autobiography." "Dead is dead," she wrote in "The Making of Americans," her astonishing anti-novel that pushes its major characters aside in favor of an infinite number of unnamed persons whom she attempts to classify, and who resemble shades. "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas" slyly mocks the immortality that biography seeks to bestow on its subjects. If you listen to the book's music, you will catch the low hum of melancholy. If you regard it as an exercise in whistling in the dark, you will understand its brilliance.

After Stein's death, Toklas pursued the protection and perpetuation of Stein's legend with matchless zeal and devotion. At the same time, and without any slackening of her literary widow's efforts, she came into her own as a personality. She no longer sat with the wives of geniuses. She began to have young men—if not young geniuses—of her own. One of these, the novelist Donald Windham, who had become acquainted with Toklas in Rome in the spring of 1961, noted, in a memoir called "The Roman Spring of Alice Toklas," that "graciousness—unapologetic graciousness—was Alice Toklas's most pervasive characteristic that spring: a graciousness that made her plain features appear beautiful as soon as you were at ease with her." Windham's memoir includes letters from Toklas to him and his partner, Sandy Campbell, that illustrate the observation. Graciousness radiates from her letters to Windham and Campbell and, indeed, from all her post-Stein correspondence. (Edward Burns collected it in a volume called "Staying on Alone," published in 1973.) Toklas called letter-writing her "work," and she did it extremely well. She had a kind of genius for it. The epistolary art is the art of favorable self-representation; Toklas emerges from her letters as a great lady, witty, self-deprecating, attentive, cultivated. Her forays into what Henry James called the "twaddle of graciousness" are especially masterly. Here she is thanking the American journalist W. G. Rogers for a gift parcel she received from him and his wife, Mildred, in March, 1947:



> I went into the bed room and there was the package—I was so excited I forgot my exhaustion and boredom and opened it feverishly (but carefully undoing the string). And there were all the treasures—no I just couldn't believe my eyes—the wonderful towels—the warm combies (not a darn—*new new new*) the lavender soap (sweet but naughty Mildred) and then oh then the utterly lovely scarf. I never thought to see anything like it again—to say nothing of having it for my own. It's a royal gift and it's overwhelmingly beautiful. In the evening I had a visit from my young Turkish painter and I gave him a long lecture on the simplicity and at the same time subtlety of the American gift—the unerring taste—the appreciation of métier and quality that no European realises or will accept.

In another letter of thanks—this one for an "exquisite nosegay holder"—the twaddle becomes intertwined with a piece of history, and a grudge. "Never have I seen anything so lovely and it gives me so much pleasure," Toklas writes to her friend Louise Taylor in January, 1947, and goes on:

> You see when the Germans came . . . and then—well we won't go into that—they took a great many things but not a picture—not a drawing—not a piece of furniture—so that Gertrude wouldn't ever let me mention anything about it ever because she said we had got off mighty easily—and of course she was right. She absolutely used the pictures every minute of the day and so that was alright—but the rooms lacked the prettiness and elegance they had and sometimes I minded it secretly . . . And now my dear—all the missing elegance has returned and I thank you very deeply.

What Toklas "won't go into" and what Gertrude "wouldn't ever let me mention" is the looting of bibelots, linens, and utensils from the apartment on Rue Christine during the pair's wartime absence. The painting collection remained in place. There was a moment of danger in July, 1944, when four Gestapo men broke into the apartment and threatened to cut up and burn the Picassos, which they saw as *saloperie juive*. A resourceful neighbor called the French police, who were able to dispatch the Gestapo men by asking them for requisition orders that they did not have. (When the police arrived, the Gestapo men were in Stein's bedroom trying on her Chinese coats.) A longer-term reprieve for the paintings was achieved by Bernard Faÿ, the collaborationist who protected Stein and Toklas during the war, and now used his influence to protect the art. But no one protected the pretty things that Toklas cherished. (In her memoir, she notes that a petit-point footstool she had made after a design by Picasso and a pair of Louis XV silver candlesticks were among the objects stolen from the apartment.) In her tour de force of resentment against Stein, swathed in yards of silky compliment to Louise Taylor, Toklas permits us a poignant glimpse of her position as the wife of a willful genius.

However, one of the most astute of Toklas's young men, the classics professor and critic Donald Sutherland, questions whether Toklas ever actually played the wife-of-a-genius role as it is supposed to be played. In his memoir "Alice and Gertrude and Others" (1971), Sutherland tells this story:

> The self-effacement which Alice is supposed to have cultivated and which indeed was carried so far that her very existence was debated in the press, became a form of publicity in itself, and if she did subordinate herself to Gertrude, in public at least, she was not at all the sort willingly to disappear. I had been put straight about her existence long ago, when I turned up at the apartment with a large bouquet of small roses for Gertrude. I did something that should have been unpardonable: I gave the bouquet to Alice at the door as one would give it to a maid who would then fetch a vase for it. But Alice brought the bouquet and me at once into the living room, saying, "Look, Lovey, what Donald has brought me! Thank you so much. How did you know these are just my favorite flowers?" Then she went to get a vase.

Sutherland was put straight about

Toklas's steel, but, like Joan Chapman and everyone else who knew both women, he preferred Stein's gold. During a final visit he makes to Toklas in 1966 (she died in 1967), an extraordinary memory of Stein comes to him. Toklas has brought up Hemingway and says, "You know, I made Gertrude get rid of him."

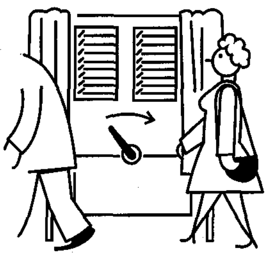
> "I know," I said. I knew it, not only by inference from the book ["A Moveable Feast"], I also knew something we had never discussed, that the relation between Gertrude Stein and Hemingway was more than literary comradeship at one time or even than maternal and filial affection. I had heard that Hemingway had not infrequently said in conversation and once at least in a letter that he had always wanted to lay her.

The letter Sutherland means was written to W. G. Rogers on the occasion of the publication of his memoir "When This You See Remember Me: Gertrude Stein in Person" (1948). Hemingway wrote, "She used to talk to me about homosexuality and how it was fine in and for women and no good in men and I used to listen and learn and I always wanted to fuck her and she knew it."

Sutherland goes on, "I could well believe it, for the second time I met her she came too close and my sexual response was both unequivocal and, considering that I was nineteen and she sixty, bewildering. She said in a book I was very nervous when we first met; nervous would be no word for me the second time."

Has the magazine dropped from the reader's hand? Has anything prepared him for Sutherland's erection? Hemingway's line is the sort of macho showing off that one expects of him and only half believes. But Sutherland's account has the ring of whole truth. Fattuski (as Stein called herself in the erotic poem "Lifting Belly") was obviously a powerfully sexy woman, attractive to men as well as to women. It was no wonder that Alice was jealous of everyone, male or female, who "came too close." (Ulla Dydo, in the course of trying to decipher a hermetic piece called "An Elucidation," through the study of Stein's notebooks, came to a surprising conclusion about Stein and Toklas's sex life. She found reason to think that Stein regularly gave Toklas orgasms—called "cows" in the notebooks—but received none herself. "Her own sexual feelings," Dydo writes in her 2003 book "Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises," "always have a babyish and cuddly tone. Baby does not experience orgasms but wants cuddling." This is a remarkable reversal of roles: outside the bedroom Toklas does all the work—she is cook, housekeeper, typist, secretary—but in bed it is Stein who labors; she calls herself "the best cow giver in all the world.")

Sutherland and Toklas are having their conversation about Hemingway at her apartment, but it is not the elegant flat to which Doda Conrad came for tea and from which Roubina snatched the great paintings. Toklas has been evicted from 5 Rue Christine and is living in an austere fifth-floor flat in a modern building on the Rue de la Convention that Doda Conrad and Janet Flanner found for her. She is old and disabled. The threat of eviction had been hanging over her for many years, but she disregarded it, thinking she could beat it. When 5 Rue Christine was sold, she turned down the chance to buy her apartment, believing herself safe as an elderly statutory tenant. However, French law dictated that an apartment could not remain vacant for more than four months, and when Toklas was in Rome during the winter of 1960-61 the apartment's owners made their move to expel her, filing eviction papers. She fought the expulsion for several years by getting influential people to intervene. In May, 1963, Toklas wrote to Sutherland, "Jo Barry and Doda Conrad are at work. Doda is getting Malraux to work. It appears he's all powerful! Madeleine thinks that if General de Gaulle is not going to save me I had better go to a hotel at once." But even Malraux and de Gaulle couldn't make the impossible possible. Toklas was able to fend off the eviction for another year, but in November of 1964 it took place.



Sutherland was part of the group led by the forceful Doda Conrad that looked after the destitute, aged Toklas. In "Alice and Gertrude and Others," he writes of visiting Toklas in 1965 at a nursing home where she is recovering from a broken hip. He finds her "sitting up in an armchair, dressed in a dressing gown which was not fresh and on which she had dribbled." He asks her "as delicately as I could" about her finances and learns that "she was penniless, without even the pin-money to send a maid out for a newspaper or a bottle of toilet water." Sutherland thrusts a few hundred francs into her purse and then reflects on the general problem of looking after Alice. The friends who have established a fund are afraid of putting it into her hands, lest she "spend it foolishly and run through it in a few months or less." Conrad writes in his memoir, "It was difficult to satisfy Alice Toklas's tastes, which were still extravagant. I remember tricking her by having fruit bought at the market and having it brought to her in used bags from Fauchon or Hédiard. This gave her the illusion of eating the best food Paris had to offer and of offering her visitors sherry of noble origins." But Sutherland's own fears are not about fancy food—they are about Catholic dogma. He worries about Toklas's worry that her plan of meeting Gertrude in Heaven will go awry unless palms are greased. According to Catholic dogma, the unbaptized Stein is in Limbo. "How did one go about getting Gertrude out of Limbo? . . . With enough prayer, enough masses and candles, enough penitence, Gertrude could be sprung and settled in Purgatory to await Alice before they went on together to Heaven. It could be made very expensive, and it is possible that if Alice had a perfectly free hand, all or most of the Picasso collection would now be in the Vatican Museum." Sutherland ends his mordant aria by noting of Toklas that "her own salvation was endangered now, for her confessor, finding her without money, had ceased to visit her."

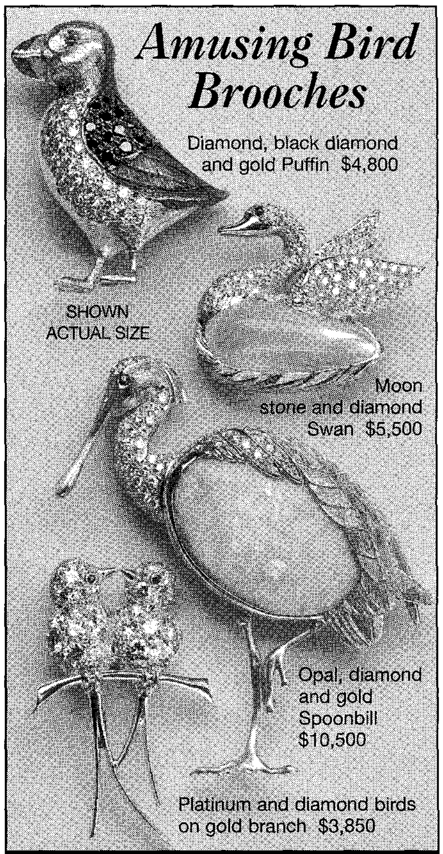
Virgil Thomson, in his 1966 autobiography, records a conversation with Gertrude Stein about a difference he saw between Jews and Christians. Jews, Thomson said, are always breaking up with their friends while Christians make up after quarrels. "The explanation I offered for such independent behavior was that the Jewish religion, though it sets aside a day for private Atonement, offers no mechanics for forgiveness. . . . When a Christian, on the other hand, knows he has done wrong to anyone, he is obliged in all honesty to attempt restitution; and the person he has wronged must thereupon forgive." Stein took no umbrage at the slyly anti-Semitic comparison. In fact, she "liked this explanation, and for nearly twenty years it remained our convention." Thomson adds:

> It was not until after Gertrude's death that Alice said one day, "You and Gertrude had it settled between you as to why Jews don't make up their quarrels, and I went along with you. But now I've found a better reason for it. Gertrude was right, of course, to believe that 'when a Jew dies he's dead.' And that's exactly why Jews don't need to make up. When we've had enough of someone we can get rid of him. You Christians can't, because you've got to spend eternity together."

We can get rid of him. The "we" leaps off the page. In no other memoir, in no letter or in any book or article, does Toklas identify herself as a Jew. (After her conversion, she was quick to assume a Christian identity; the term "our Lord Jesus Christ" rolled easily off her pen in a letter written the day after her admission to the Church.) It seems likely that Toklas in her remarks to Thomson maintained her customary distance from her tribe, and that Thomson—not realizing that Toklas was a Jew with explanations—interpolated the "we." Toklas was hardly the only Jew to pretend she wasn't one. She was born into an anti-Semitic world—one that not only produced Hitler but tolerated low-grade anti-Semitism among even its most civilized members. Here, for example, is the civilized Donald Sutherland, writing to Thornton Wilder's sister, Isabel, about Toklas's biographer: "I want to ask you about one Linda Simon. . . . Is she the impossibly preëmptive Jewess she sounds like, or something else?" Linda Simon is a reserved, soft-spoken professor of English literature at Skidmore College who is as far as it is possible to be from the pushy yenta of Sutherland's imaginings. When she told me of the rebuffs she received while working on her book on Toklas thirty years ago, she attributed them to her youth and inexperience, but, after reading Sutherland's letter, I wondered whether being Jewish was held against her as well.

In "When This You See Remember Me," Rogers writes of a car trip in the French countryside with Stein and Toklas—during which the two women constantly fought. Every arrangement was an occasion for dispute. Stein was the naughty child who wants to have fun no matter what, and Toklas was the grownup with tightly compressed lips. "While few people question Miss Stein's genius, not so much has been heard about Miss Toklas'. If the one is the creative spirit, the other is the immensely practical spirit," Rogers tactfully writes, and goes on, "It was as if Miss Stein's practical sense had been removed from her person and deposited in the person of Miss Toklas. The ego was in the front seat"—Stein did the driving: dangerously—"and the alter ego in the back. The battle which most geniuses fight within themselves was exteriorized and fought openly between her and her friend." "Do you not get tired of always being right?" Stein wrote in an abstruse late work called "The Geographical History of America"—surely, on some level, addressing Toklas.

Posterity has not dealt kindly with Stein's alter ego. Deep mythic structures determine who is likable and who isn't among the famous dead. The practical spirit is an essential but unlovable spirit. Toklas remains the dour ugly crone to Stein's handsome playful princess. The memoirists who profess to love Toklas (only Doda Conrad levelled about his feelings) allow their distaste to leak out. Sutherland cannot spare her the robe on which she has dribbled. Donald Windham notices that as she chews artichokes in a restaurant she is "unaware that the oil [is] running down her chin." Doda Conrad, also watching Toklas eat, likens her to "a little voracious, ravenous animal throwing itself on its food, eyes fixed on the other half of the bite she has just swallowed for fear that it might escape!" Toklas's efforts to secure Life Everlasting may have succeeded, but her hopes of being kindly remembered on earth have fallen short. As Gertrude Stein said, Life is funny that way. ♦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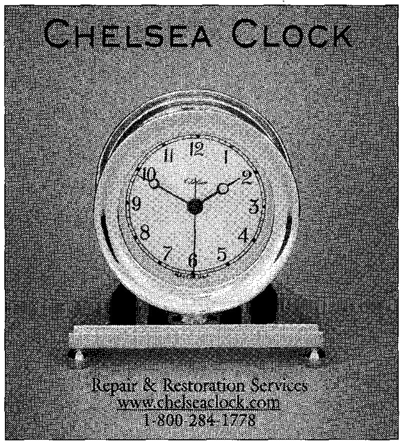
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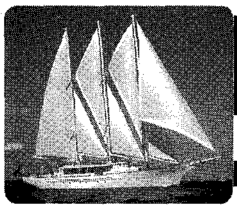
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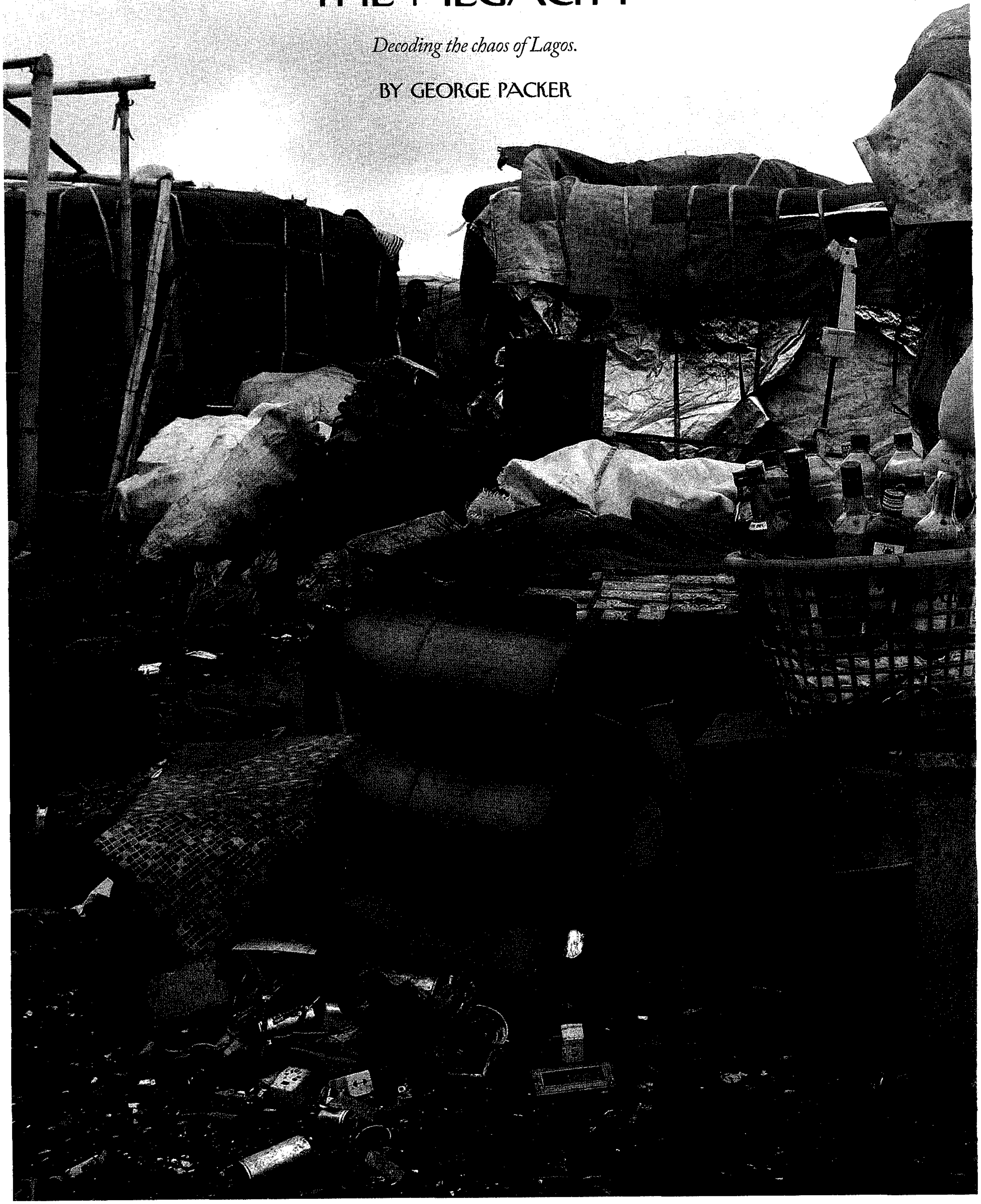
A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE MEGACITY

Decoding the chaos of Lagos.

BY GEORGE PACKER



Women who live in the city dump. Lagos has become the archetype of the megacity, perhaps because its growth has been so explosive, perh

SangYong
Motor

ause its cityscape has become so apocalyptic. Photographs by Samantha Appleton.

The Third Mainland Bridge is a looping ribbon of concrete that connects Lagos Island to the continent of Africa. It was built in the nineteen-seventies, part of a vast network of bridges, cloverleafs, and expressways intended to transform the districts and islands of this Nigerian city—then comprising three million people—into an efficient modern metropolis. As the bridge snakes over sunken piers just above the waters of Lagos Lagoon, it passes a floating slum: thousands of wooden houses, perched on stilts a few feet above their own bobbing refuse, with rust-colored iron roofs wreathed in the haze from thousands of cooking fires. Fishermen and market women paddle dugout canoes on water as black and viscous as an oil slick. The bridge then passes the sawmill district, where rain-forest logs—sent across from the far shore, thirty miles to the east—form a floating mass by the piers. Smoldering hills of sawdust landfill send white smoke across the bridge, which mixes with diesel exhaust from the traffic. Beyond the sawmills, the old waterfront markets, the fishermen's shanties, the blackened façades of high-rise housing projects, and the half-abandoned skyscrapers of downtown Lagos Island loom under a low, dirty sky. Around the city, garbage dumps steam with the combustion of natural gases, and auto yards glow with fires from fuel spills. All of Lagos seems to be burning.

The bridge descends into Lagos Island and a pandemonium of venders' stalls crammed with spare parts, locks, hard hats, chains, screws, charcoal, detergent, and DVDs. On a recent afternoon, car horns, shouting voices, and radio music mingled with the snarling engines of motorcycle taxis stalled in traffic and the roar of an air compressor in an oily tire-repair yard. Two months earlier, a huge cast-iron water main suspended beneath the bridge had broken free of its rusted clip, crushing a vacant scrap market below and cutting off clean water from tens of thousands of the fifteen million people who now live in Lagos.

In the absence of piped water, wealthier residents of the waterfront slum at the end of the bridge, called Isale Eko, pay private contractors to sink boreholes sixty feet deep. All day and night, residents line up at the boreholes to pay five cents and fill their plastic buckets with contaminated water, which some of them drink anyway. Isale Eko is the oldest and densest part of Lagos Island. Every square foot is claimed by someone—for selling, for washing, even for sleeping—and there is almost no privacy. Many residents sleep outdoors. A young man sitting in an alley pointed to some concrete ledges three feet above a gutter. "These are beds," he said.

In the newer slums on the mainland, such as Mushin, rectangular concrete-block houses squeeze seven or eight people into a single, mosquito-infested room—in bunks or on the floor—along a narrow corridor of opposing chambers. This arrangement is known as "face me I face you." One compound can contain eighty people. In Mushin, Muslim Hausas from the north of Nigeria coexist uneasily with mostly Christian Yorubas from the south. Armed gangs represent the interests of both groups. On the night of February 2, 2002, a witness told me, a Hausa youth saw a Yoruba youth squatting over a gutter on the street and demanded, "Why are you shitting there?" In a city where only 0.4 per cent of the inhabitants have a toilet connected to a sewer system, it was more of a provocation than a serious question. The incident that night led to a brawl. Almost immediately, the surrounding compounds emptied out, and the streets filled with Yorubas and Hausas armed with machetes and guns. The fighting lasted four days and was ended only by the military occupation of Mushin. By then, more than a hundred residents had been killed, thousands had fled the area, and hundreds of houses had burned down.

Newcomers to the city are not greeted with the words "Welcome to Lagos." They are told, "This is Lagos"—an ominous statement of fact. Olisa Izeobi, a worker in one of the sawmills along the lagoon, said, "We understand this as 'Nobody will care for you, and you have to struggle to survive.' " It is the singular truth awaiting the six hundred thousand people who pour into Lagos from West Africa every year. Their lungs will burn with smoke and exhaust; their eyes will sting; their skin will turn charcoal gray. And hardly any of them will ever leave.

Immigrants come to Lagos with the thinnest margin of support, dependent on a local relative or contact whose assistance usually lasts less than twenty-four hours. A girl from the Ibo country, in the southeast, said that she had been told by a woman in her home town that she would get restaurant work in Lagos. Upon arrival, she discovered that she owed the woman more than two hundred dollars for transport and that the restaurant job didn't exist. The girl, her hair combed straight back and her soft face fixed in a faraway stare, told me that she was eighteen, but she looked fifteen. She is now a prostitute in a small hotel called Happiness. Working seven nights a week, with each customer spending three and a half dollars and staying five minutes, she had paid off her debt after seven months. She has no friends except the other girls in the hotel. In her room, on the third floor, the words "I am covered by the blood of Jesus. Amen" are chalked on a wall three times.

A woman named Safrat Yinusa left behind her husband and two of her children in Ilorin, north of the city, and found work in one of Lagos's huge markets as a porter, carrying loads of produce on her head. She was nursing a baby boy, whom she carried as she worked. She paid twenty cents a night for sleeping space on the floor of a room with forty other women porters. In two months, she had saved less than four dollars. Considering that the price of rice in Lagos is thirty-three cents per pound, it is hard to understand how people like Yinusa stay alive. The paradox has been called the "wage puzzle."

When Michael Chinedu, an Ibo, arrived in Lagos, he knew no one. On his first day, he saw a man smoking marijuana—in Lagos, it's called India hemp—and, being a smoker as well, introduced himself. On this slim connection, Chinedu asked the man if he knew of any jobs, and he was taken to the sawmill, where he began at once, working long days amid the scream of the ripsaw and burning clouds of sawdust, sleeping outside at night on a stack of hardwood planks. After three months, he had saved enough for a room. "If you sit down, you will die of hunger," he said.

The hustle never stops in Lagos. Informal transactions make up at least sixty per cent of economic activity; at stoplights and on highways, crowds of boys as young as eight hawk everything from cell phones to fire extinguishers. Begging is rare. In many African cities, there is an oppressive atmosphere of people lying about in the middle of the day, of idleness sinking into despair. In Lagos, everyone is a striver. I once saw a woman navigating across several lanes of traffic with her small boy in tow, and the expression on her face was one I came to think of as typically Lagosian: a look hard, closed, and unsmiling, yet quick and shrewd, taking in everything, ready to ward off an obstacle or seize a chance.

In 1950, fewer than three hundred thousand people lived in Lagos. In the second half of the twentieth century, the city grew at a rate of more than six per cent annually. It is currently the sixth-largest city in the world, and it is growing faster than any of the world's other megacities (the term used by the United Nations Center for Human Settlements for "urban agglomerations" with more than ten million people). By 2015, it is projected, Lagos will rank third, behind Tokyo and Bombay, with twenty-three million inhabitants.

When I first went to Lagos, in 1983, it already had a fearsome reputation among Westerners and Africans alike. Many potential visitors were kept away simply by the prospect of getting through the airport, with its official shakedowns and swarming touts. Once you made it into the city, a gantlet of armed robbers, con men, corrupt policemen, and homicidal bus drivers awaited you.

"Because when you put the Rorschachs in your pants I can't use them again."

Recently, Lagos has begun to acquire a new image. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the Third World's megacities have become the focus of intense scholarly interest, in books such as Mike Davis's "Planet of Slums," Suketu Mehta's "Maximum City," and Robert Neuwirth's "Shadow Cities." Neuwirth, having lived for two years in slum neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, Nairobi, and other cities, came to see the world's urban squatters as pioneers and patriots, creating solid communities without official approval from the state or the market. "Today, the world's squatters are demonstrating a new way forward in the fight to create a more equitable globe," he wrote. What squatters need most of all, he argued, is the right to stay where they are: "Without any laws to support them, they are making their improper, illegal communities grow and prosper."

Stewart Brand, the founder of the Whole Earth Catalog and a business strategist based in Marin County, California, goes even further. "Squatter cities are *vibrant*," he writes in a recent article on megacities. "Each narrow street is one long bustling market." He sees in the explosive growth of "aspirational shantytowns" a cure for Third World poverty and an extraordinary profit-making opportunity. "How does all this relate to businesspeople in the developed world?" Brand asks. "One-fourth of humanity trying new things in new cities is a lot of potential customers, collaborators, and competitors."

In the dirty gray light of Lagos, however, Neuwirth's portrait of heroic builders of the cities of tomorrow seems a bit romantic, and Brand's vision of a global city of interconnected entrepreneurs seems perverse. The vibrancy of the squatters in Lagos is the furious activity of people who live in a globalized economy and have no safety net and virtually no hope of moving upward.

Around a billion people—almost half of the developing world's urban population—live in slums. The United Nations Human Settlements Program, in a 2003 report titled "The Challenge of the Slums," declared, "The urban poor are trapped in an informal and 'illegal' world—in slums that are not reflected on maps, where waste is not collected, where taxes are not paid, and where public services are not provided. Officially, they do not exist." According to the report, "Over the course of the next two decades, the global urban population will double, from 2.5 to 5

Gahan Wilson

"I suppose you think this is boring!"

• •

billion. Almost all of this increase will be in developing countries."

In 2000, the United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals. One of them is to improve the lives of a hundred million slum dwellers by 2020, in terms of shelter, water, sewers, jobs, and governance. This will require enormous expenditures of money and effort, but even if the goal is achieved nearly a quarter of the world's population—more than two billion people—will still be living in conditions like those in Lagos.

To some Western intellectuals, Lagos has become the archetype of the megacity—perhaps because its growth has been so explosive, and perhaps because its cityscape has become so apocalyptic. It has attracted the attention of leading writers and artists, who have mounted international exhibitions in London and Berlin. All this interest has somehow transformed Lagos into a hip icon of the latest global trends, the much studied megalopolis of the future, like London and Paris in the nineteenth century or New York and Tokyo in the twentieth. For several years, the Dutch architect and urban theorist Rem Koolhaas has been working with his students at the Harvard Graduate School of Design on a project to study the future of cities; he has gone to Lagos four times and produced several articles as well as a book to be published early next year, "Lagos: How It Works." Koolhaas once described Lagos to an interviewer as a protean organism that creatively defies constrictive Western ideas of urban order. "What is now fascinating is how, with some level of self-organization, there is a strange combination of extreme underdevelopment and development," he said. "And what particularly amazes me is how the kinds of infrastructure of modernity in the city trigger off all sorts of unpredictable improvised conditions, so that there is a kind of mutual dependency that I've never seen anywhere else." With its massive traffic jams creating instant markets on roads and highways, Lagos is not "a kind of backward situation," Koolhaas said, but, rather, "an announcement of the future."

As a picture of the urban future, Lagos is fascinating only if you're able to leave it. After just a few days in the city's slums, it is hard to maintain Koolhaas's intellectual excitement. What he calls "self-organization" is simply collective adaptation to extreme hardship. Traffic pileups lead to "improvised conditions" because there is no other way for most people in Lagos to scratch out a living than to sell on the street. It would be preferable to have some respite from buying and selling, some separation between private and public life. It would be preferable not to have five-hour "go-slows"—traffic jams—that force many workers to get up well before dawn and spend almost no waking hours at home. And it would be preferable not to have an economy in which millions of people have to invent marginal forms of employment because there are so few jobs.

I asked Paul Okunlola, an editor at the Nigerian newspaper the *Guardian*, why people kept coming to Lagos, when there seemed so little chance of getting ahead. "They never believe there's no chance," he said. Okunlola described the largest market in Lagos: the Mile 12, on the highway heading north out of town, where foodstuff coming into the city is bought and sold wholesale. It is a muddy area—much of Lagos is reclaimed swampland—and workers with buckets of water earn seven cents washing the feet of market women. "That is the kind of entrepreneurship that keeps a lot of people in Lagos," Okunlola said. "If you took that to my home town, who would wash feet—and who would pay money for it, anyway? That is what drives Lagos."

Folarin Gbadebo-Smith, the chairman of a district on Lagos Island, said that globalization, in the form of mass media, attracts Nigerians to Lagos as a substitute for New York or London. A distorted picture then flows back to the village. "Come Christmas, everybody in Lagos—the successful and the unsuccessful—packs their bags and goes off to the rural areas to show off what they have achieved," Gbadebo-Smith said. "Some achievements are real, for some it's just a mirage, but everybody's there showing off. So the young people in the villages very quickly come to the conclusion that 'Hey, I've got to go to Lagos, make enough to be able to come back here, and to show off.' " In this way, the West African countryside is being rapidly depopulated.

Adegoke Taylor, a skinny, solemn thirty-two-year-old itinerant trader with anxious eyes, shares an eight-by-ten-foot room with three other young men, on an alley in Isale Eko several hundred feet from the Third Mainland Bridge. In 1999, Taylor came to Lagos from Ile-Oluji, a Yoruba town a hundred and thirty miles to the northeast. He had a degree in mining from a polytechnic school and the goal of establishing a professional career. Upon arriving in the city, he went to a club that played juju—pop music infused with Yoruba rhythms—and stayed out until two in the morning. "This experience alone makes me believe I have a new life living now," he said, in English, the lingua franca of Lagos. "All the time, you see crowds everywhere. I was motivated by that. In the village, you're not free at all, and whatever you're going to do today you'll do tomorrow." Taylor soon found that none of the few mining positions being advertised in Lagos newspapers were open to him. "If you are not connected, it's not easy, because there are many more applications than jobs," he said. "The moment you don't have a recognized person saying, 'This is my boy, give him a job,' it's very hard. In this country, if you don't belong to the élite"—he pronounced it "e-*light*"—"you will find things very, very hard."

Taylor fell into a series of odd jobs: changing money, peddling stationery and hair plaits, and moving heavy loads in a warehouse for a daily wage of four hundred naira—about three dollars. Occasionally, he worked for West African traders who came to the markets near the port and needed middlemen to locate goods. At first, he stayed with the sister of a childhood friend in Mushin, then found cheap lodging there in a shared room for seven dollars a month, until the building was burned down during the ethnic riots. Taylor lost everything. He decided to move to Lagos Island, where he pays a higher rent, twenty dollars a month.

Taylor had tried to leave Africa but was turned down for a visa by the American and British Embassies. At times, he longed for the calm of his home town, but there was never any question of returning to Ile-Oluji, with its early nights and monotonous days and the prospect of a lifetime of manual labor. His future was in Lagos, and he kept trying various small-business plans, none of which had worked out, for a simple reason. "There's no capital to start," he said. For this, he blamed the Nigerian government. "Most of the people who lead us embezzle instead of using that money to create factories," he said. "Our parents' generation was O.K. But this generation is a wasted generation—unless God comes to the aid. Because we know there is money in Nigeria." In fact, oil-export revenue exceeded fifty billion dollars in 2005.

Taylor escorted me along the alley to my car, which was in the shadow of the bridge. We slipped past a menacing group of "area boys," who act as parking attendants and shake down anyone who drives onto their turf.

"There's no escape, except to make it," Taylor said.

Stephen Omojoro, a fifty-two-year-old taxi-driver and father of four, with broad horizontal and vertical tribal scars carved into both cheeks, took me around Lagos in an aging Mercedes. In his version of the arrival story, Omojoro came to Lagos when he was seventeen, in the early seventies, after his father's death forced him to quit school. He spent the first night with a relative, who gave him enough money for one dinner. After that, he was on his own. The following morning, having heard about the sawmills, he showed up and was given a job carrying planks and logs. At night, he slept outside. Many people in Lagos sleep where they work—in markets under flyovers, in truck cabs parked in truck yards, inside tiny shops, on the handlebars of their motorcycle taxis.

As we drove around the megacity, Omojoro described his recent history in a harsh, hoarse voice that seemed to have been seared by the polluted air. In his view, Lagos has been deteriorating since shortly after his arrival, owing to a general moral collapse brought on by the oil boom of the seventies. What he remembered as a city of enterprising family men like himself is now overrun with corrupt soldiers, politicians, and police, and with a mass of young people willing to do anything for money except honest work. He believes in order, and he disdainfully pointed out planned residential neighborhoods that are now overgrown with roadside markets, and "temporary" settlements that have survived for decades. (Omojoro once got into a shouting match with a woman in Mushin who had put out a display of wigs on a stretch of roadside pavement that theoretically belonged to traffic, not

"It's definitely a change of tactics, but the over-all strategy remains the same."

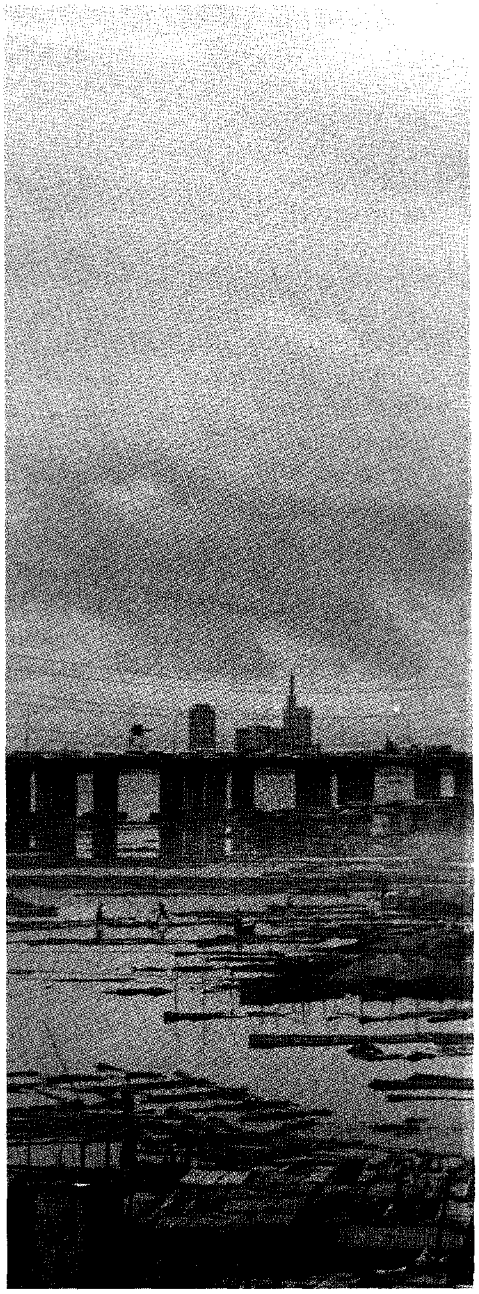
commerce.) He also condemned the heedless, often lethal driving of young men who, fortified at dawn by palm-wine gin or India hemp, make their living behind the wheel of the ubiquitous yellow passenger minibuses known as *danfo*. Omojoro described such drivers as "irresponsible somebodies—they don't care for nobody, nobody cares for them." (The wooden-backed pickup trucks used to carry produce and other goods are called *bole kaja*, which means "get down and let's fight.")

What is missing from Omojoro's declinist account is the effect of national and international economic policies on the city. There was once a master plan for Lagos. One day, Oyesanya Oyelola, the director of the regional- and master-plan department in the state government, spread a faded map across his desk. The plan, jointly drawn up in the seventies by the firm of Wilbur Smith and Associates, the United Nations Development Program, and the Lagos state government, was intended to guide the growth of the city in the last two decades of the twentieth century. There were to be thirty-five self-sufficient district centers, represented on the map by clusters of dots, each with commercial, industrial, and residential zones, to prevent congestion on Lagos Island. A fourth mainland bridge would connect the Lekki peninsula, extending east from Victoria Island along the coast, to the towns popping up on the north shore of the lagoon, which would disperse traffic heading into the city. There was to be a light-rail and ferry system bringing commuters to the major business centers on the mainland and across to Lagos Island. To the east and west of the city, wetlands, forest, and agricultural land were reserved.

On New Year's Eve, 1983, a bloodless coup overthrew civilian rule, and for the next sixteen years a series of military dictators from northern Nigeria treated Lagos, the country's center of democratic activism, as a source of personal enrichment. While the military rulers cut themselves in on the city's commercial action, the master plan "was abandoned," Oyelola said, along with any thought of investing in the infrastructure necessary to absorb millions of new arrivals. He showed me the result, unfurling a second map of Lagos, as it is today: a sea of yellow spreading out across the mainland. "Most of the green land has been eaten up by the flow of people—it has become residential," he said. On the master plan, there were forty-two areas identified as "blighted" and scheduled for improvement; now there are fifty-four.

Shina Loremikan, who runs an anti-corruption organization, lives in Ajegunle, Lagos's biggest and most dangerous slum, across a canal from the port. The drainage ditches of Ajegunle are frequently blocked, and during the rainy season they overflow into houses and across streets, which fill up with sludge, sacks, scraps of clothing, and plastic bags, so that some of Ajegunle's streets seem to be wholly composed of trash. I asked Loremikan to show me the slum areas on a map of Lagos. With his finger, he drew a line from the southeast corner all the way to the northwest. "From here to here, they are all slums," Loremikan said flatly. "Refuse is everywhere, either in Victoria Island or Ikoyi"—Lagos's two relatively upscale districts—"or in Agege or Mushin. Black water is everywhere. They are all slums."

Other megacities, such as Bombay, Dhaka, Manila, and São Paulo, have spawned entire satellite cities that house migrants and the destitute, who lead lives that often have nothing to do with the urban center to which they were originally drawn. Lagos expanded differently: there is no distinct area where a million people squat in flimsy hovels. The whole city suffers from misuse. Planned residential areas—such as Surulere, built for civil servants on the mainland—are gradually taken over by the commercial activity that springs up everywhere in Lagos like fungus after the rains. Areas reclaimed from swamps give rise to economic clusters whose nature depends on location: for example, Mushin became one of the city's central spare-parts yards when the Apapa-Oshodi Expressway was built near it, in the seventies. "Everywhere is market," Stephen Omojoro said as we drove around. "There's no dull area at all." It's hard to decide if the extravagant ugliness of the cityscape is a sign of vigor or of disease—a life force or an impending apocalypse.



The Third Mainland Bridge viewed from

Although new developments spring up in every possible direction—west toward the Benin border, north to the boundary of Lagos state, east toward the oil delta—most of them are unaffordable to the urban poor or too far from practical employment. Instead, Lagos packs its millions into existing concrete-block housing, in ever larger numbers. There was a building spree of public-housing projects in the years before the 1983 coup—the complexes are still called Jakande estates, after the Lagos state governor who led the effort—but today the clusters of eight- or ten-story high-rises have a leprous aspect, as if some blackening disease were creeping across their façades. Most of them are being sold off to private developers, who resell them at market rates.

ating slum. Unlike other megacities, Lagos has no distinct satellite areas where the destitute live. The whole city suffers from misuse.

In the mid-eighties, under the dictatorship of General Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria submitted to austerity measures prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in order to reduce a thirty-billion-dollar debt. Over time, the country shut down or sold off inefficient state-run enterprises, including construction industries, port facilities, oil refineries, and textile and steel mills; electricity, water, and telephone services were privatized. With these structural adjustments, civil-service jobs, the mainstay of the middle class in districts like Surulere, disappeared; meanwhile, privatization often occurred at fire-sale prices, with the profits benefitting politicians or soldiers and their cronies. The remaining savings were devoured by the corrupt military regimes. (An official report released after the fall of Babangida, in 1994, could not account for twelve billion dollars.)

The effect of these policies in Nigeria has been to concentrate enormous wealth in a few hands while leaving the vast majority of people poorer every year. The rare job that still awaits young men and women who come to Lagos pays less than it did a quarter century ago; it is also less likely to be salaried, and more likely to be menial. At the same time, the cost of rent, food, and fuel has soared. If there is an element of American frontier capitalism in the unregulated informal economy of Lagos, there is much less opportunity to make hard work pay off. And if the teeming slums of Lagos recall the "darkness, dirt, pestilence, obscenity, misery and early death" that Dickens described in an essay about Victorian London, there is no industrial base to offer the poor masses at least the possibility of regular employment.

One morning, on the entrance ramp to a highway, a Peugeot in front of Omojoro's car braked in heavy traffic. Between us, a sinewy old man was pulling a two-wheeled cart loaded down with so much rusty machinery that he couldn't keep it under control. It's common in Lagos to see workers performing savagely hard labor out of the pre-industrial age. When the old man tried to stop, the cart's right wheel sank into a pothole; then the cart lurched forward, its wooden handle breaking the glass of the Peugeot's tail-light. The driver checked his rearview mirror and moved as if to get out, but before he could open his door two teen-agers who were sitting on the guardrail stood up and waved him to go on, then walked over and began negotiating with the old man, who was already reaching in his trouser pocket with a kind of humble resignation. The incident happened so fast that afterward Omojoro had to explain to me what had been immediately understood by all the participants. The teen-agers were area boys, and, since this block was under their control, the money that the old man owed the driver for his tail-light would, according to the city's peculiar logic, go to them instead.

What looks like anarchic activity in Lagos is actually governed by a set of informal but ironclad rules. Although the vast majority of people in the city are small-time entrepreneurs, almost no one works for himself. Everyone occupies a place in an economic hierarchy and owes fealty, as well as cash, to the person above him—known as an *oga,* or master—who, in turn, provides help or protection. Every group of workers—even at the stolen-goods market in the Ijora district—has a union that amounts to an extortion racket. The teen-ager hawking sunglasses in traffic receives the merchandise from a wholesaler, to whom he turns over ninety per cent of his earnings; if he tries to cheat or cut out, his guarantor—an authority figure such as a relative or a man from his home town, known to the vender and the wholesaler alike—has to make up the loss, then hunt down his wayward charge. The patronage system helps the megacity absorb the continual influx of newcomers for whom the formal economy has no use. Wealth accrues not to the most imaginative or industrious but to those who rise up through the chain of patronage. It amounts to a predatory system of obligation, set down in no laws, enforced by implied threat.

Omojoro's Mercedes was creeping through the dense market streets of Ajegunle one day when he started to make a left turn into a narrow road. Suddenly, a young man came out of the crowd, yelling that Omojoro had made an illegal turn. He was an *agbero*—a member of the transport workers' union, whose official job is to act as an intermediary between bus drivers and their passengers. The *agberos* of the state transport union, who wore yellow-and-maroon reflector vests, were in open warfare with the *agberos* of the federal union, who wore white vests and black berets. This man wasn't wearing a vest, but his swagger implied that the corner was under his personal control. He wanted money, on the pretext of helping Omojoro bribe the traffic police—he would keep part of it for himself, and the rest would go to his branch of the union local, one of fifty-seven in Lagos state. The *agberos* of a given zone have to generate a minimum of, say, thirty-five dollars a day for their local branch and the police. All this activity is technically illegal.

"Go to hell, I won't deal with you," Omojoro almost spat out the window. "You're an *agbero.*"

The man glared and pointed. "You called me *agbero* because you don't know me."

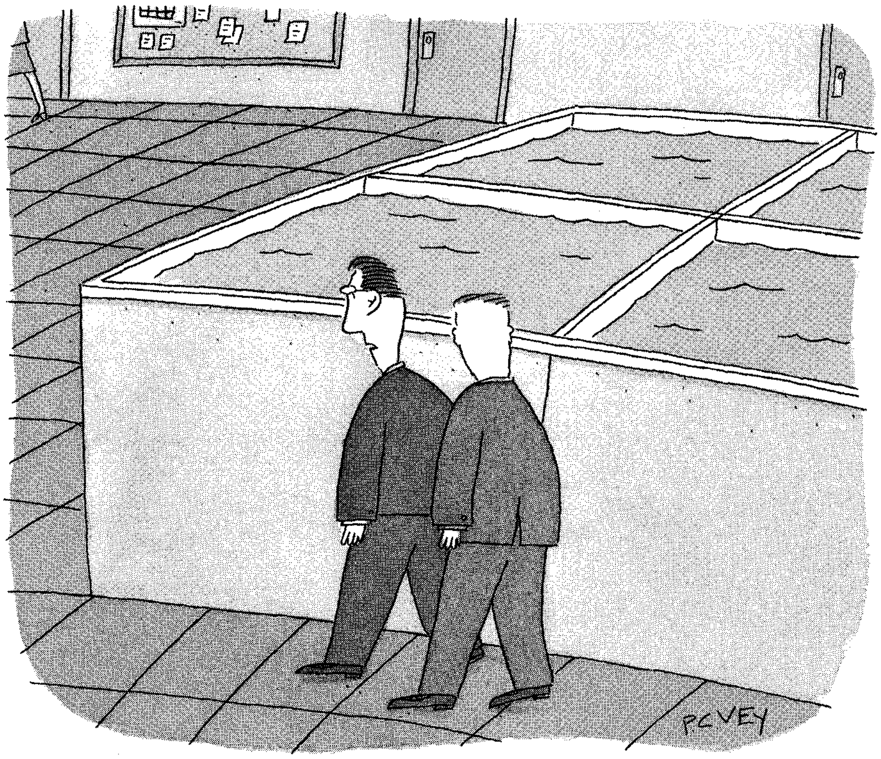
"I don't want to know you," Omojoro said. "I respect the man in uniform."

A traffic cop had come over to investigate the dispute. "I thank you for that statement," he told Omojoro. "I am ready to settle with you." They negotiated a fine down from fourteen dollars to three-fifty. Most people would have coöperated with the *agbero*, who always has a network of area boys in the vicinity, to vandalize the car until the driver pays up. Omojoro called the *agbero's* bluff, having seen the traffic cop, who was forced to intervene, in order not to be reported up his chain of command for failing to take a bribe himself.

"Ted's flamboyantly straight."

A sign near the headquarters of Shell Oil on Victoria Island says, "Did You go to School, College, University, Polytechnic, and you still throw Refuse out of your car or from the bus? Dump garbage bags on the road medians or in drains? Build your house/shop on drains? Urinate or defecate in public places? Then why did you bother to get an education? Think about it!"

The sign is part of a government-led campaign for beautification and order in Lagos. Such efforts appeal to the middle-class public-spiritedness of older Lagosians like Stephen Omojoro. But the megacity doesn't encourage social responsibility and collective action to improve public life. The very scale of it is atomizing. The absence of government services in most neighborhoods rarely leads to protest; instead, it forces slum dwellers to become self-sufficient through illegal activity. They tap into electrical



"It's time to restock the cubicles."

lines, causing blackouts and fires; they pay off local gangs to provide security, which means that justice in the slums is vigilante justice. In Mushin, several members of the Oodua People's Congress, a Yoruba gang, displayed for me a suspected motorcycle thief whom they had caught the night before and were holding in a dingy back room of their clubhouse: he was chained at the hands and feet, and bleeding from the head. His captors hadn't decided whether to turn him over to the police or simply kill him. Alongside the Badagry Expressway, I saw the charred remains of a corpse, recognizably human only from the buttocks and thighs, which had been burned and left to rot. No one I asked knew what it was doing there, and no one seemed particularly surprised.

In "Lagos: A City at Work," a new book of photographs and essays published by a local bookshop, David Aradeon, a professor of architecture at the University of Lagos, writes, "The people who use public space in the city and those who are supposed to regulate its use are constantly reasserting their personal interests above and beyond the common interest, and that is really what the city is about. That is the story of Lagos. And how do we go about changing this?" I asked Paul Okunlola, of the *Guardian*, why there is no organization or political party representing the millions of poor people in Lagos. He explained that Nigeria has never seen the kind of mass movements that have flourished elsewhere in Africa; in Lagos, the spirit of individualism overwhelms the idea of solidarity. "Everybody believes that his lot can and will be better," he said. "They see themselves in the mold of these more affluent people. In South Africa, they say, 'Yes, I am living in a slum,' and they will pull themselves together and fight on that basis. In Nigeria, the moment you call it a 'slum dwellers' association' you will not find anybody who is ready to join." The animating principle among the poor is the inevitability of the *oga:* no salvation without patronage. "You find people who think, It's more worth my while to associate with this man who doles out some money to me from time to time rather than congregate with like-minded, like-situationed people who are not that well-to-do."

The most famous shantytown in Lagos, called Maroko, rose up on prime oceanfront property along the southern shore of Victoria Island. In the eighties, the Lagos business district began to move to Victoria from Lagos Island, and the land became valuable. In July, 1990, the military government sent bulldozers and soldiers into Maroko, and within a few hours a quarter of a million people had been made homeless. A few miles down the coast from the site, in a concrete public-housing apartment whose ceiling was caving in, I found Prince S. A. Aiyeyemi, a sixty-eight-year-old retired postal-authority worker and the leader of the Maroko Evictees Committee. From his desk, he brought out a letter that he wanted me to give to Bola Tinubu, the Lagos governor. The letter demanded compensation for the loss of the houses owned by committee members and for resettlement to equivalent property. In the meantime, Aiyeyemi was allowing the apartment to which he'd been removed to disintegrate around him. He was slight and frail from a stroke that had left half his face paralyzed. "We shall continue to live till we get justice," he said, slurring his words. "And, if we the elderly die, our children are ready to continue. This is our own contribution to the social engineering of Nigeria." When I asked him whether it was fair for ten people to have to live in a single room, he said, "Well, there's nothing we can do about that. We don't take that so much as a social injustice. That is their economic limitations. It's only when those ten people are tampered with by government, thrown out into the open air—*that* is social injustice."

I had never heard anyone else in Lagos speak this way. This indignant old man was going to die waiting for something called justice, while everyone else in the city struggled.

Beneath the relentlessly commercial surface of Lagos lies a kind of moral unease. In many conversations, the physical blight of the city was described in ethical terms, as a general failure of character originating in the leaders and spreading down through the population. "The work ethic was destroyed by the military," Folarin Gbadebo-Smith said. "It was substituted by a lottery mentality. You were going to make it, not because you put in all this work but because you were lucky. You knew someone, or your ticket came in." Even the Pentecostal fervor that has swept across West Africa takes the form of personal striving in Lagos. Abandoned warehouses and factories on the Apapa-Oshodi Expressway have been converted into huge churches with signs that promise, "The Lord Shall Add," and on Sundays they fill up with adherents of what is known as "the gospel of prosperity." "They pray to be rich," Omojoro said. "Whether they go to Heaven or to Hell, they could care less. Because Nigeria is a hell already."

One afternoon, near the edge of Lagos Lagoon, I met a young man named Tosin Owolabi. He was barefoot, small, and solidly built, in rolled-up jeans and a dirty singlet, with the perpetually aggrieved scowl of a street urchin. He had been kicked out of school in his teens and now, at twenty-three, he was in constant motion at a variety of odd jobs at a nearby construction site: parking cars; running errands for his *oga*, who had set him up here; and loading concrete blocks and sand, which was retrieved by the bucketful from the bottom of the polluted lagoon by young men who dived forty feet without air. Owolabi spent his nights at the construction site and in the morning begged for water at a community borehole to wash himself in the bush. He smelled as if he'd missed a few days. Every Sunday, he went to church.

I asked Owolabi if he had a girlfriend. He sneered and burst out in rough, rapid English: "Lonely. Because when you have a girlfriend . . . I make a dollar and a half yesterday. To make it will be hard. Lonely. I have only me. I don't waste my money. If I don't eat, nobody will know. If I don't give her seventy-five cents, she will not trust me. I trust myself, O.K.?"

Occasionally, he went on, he paid a girl a dollar or a dollar-fifty to sleep with him, but if she called him later on his cell phone he always said, "Bye-bye, safe journey." Instead, he had saved his money—five hundred and seventy dollars, he said—and had paid a recording studio to produce his songs. They were traditional religious songs, and he sang one for me, in a high, sweet, but unremarkable voice:

God take my thanks
I am ready to praise you
Continue to do
As you are doing for me.

The studio scammed Owolabi and left him with a recording of terrible quality. Nevertheless, he was determined to try again, and had already saved more than a hundred dollars. He refused to accept that his hard-earned money could go to a likelier enterprise. Getting started as a dealer in building materials would cost him more than two thousand dollars. He was going to make it as a singer. He had put all his faith in God and himself. As we talked, he kept working, filling a customer's bag with sand, scowling and arguing about the amount. "If you want to be a big somebody in this Nigeria, you need money," he said.

Nigerians have become notorious for their Internet scams, such as e-mails with a bogus request to move funds to an offshore bank, which ask for the recipient's account number in exchange for lucrative profit. The con, which originated in Lagos, represents the perversion of talent and initiative in a society where normal paths of opportunity are closed to all but the well connected. Corruption is intrinsic to getting anything done in Lagos: while stalled in traffic, Omojoro was often on the phone with his twenty-four-year-old daughter, who had recently taken her college-board exams and was trying to negotiate a price to obtain the results. (He ended up paying thirty-five dollars.) Even morgues demand bribes for the release of corpses. The shorthand for financial crimes is "419," from the relevant chapter in the Nigerian criminal code. The words "This House Is Not for Sale: Beware of 419" are painted across the exterior walls of dilapidated houses all over the city—a warning to potential buyers not to be taken in by someone falsely claiming to be the owner.

The night before I left Lagos, Adegoke Taylor, the unemployed mining engineer in Isale Eko, sat down with me in the lobby of my hotel and laid out an offer. On a recent visit to his home village, he said, a high-school friend who had been the housekeeper of one of Nigeria's military dictators revealed that he had stolen a million and a half pounds sterling from the dictator's house after

MAPLES

When I visited as a boy, too young for chores,
a pair of maples flared before the farmhouse.
My grandfather made me a swing, dangling
rope from stout branches. I hurtled
between them high as I could, pumping
out half the day while my mind daydreamed
the joy of no school, no camp, no blocks
of other children fighting childhood's wars.
With the old people I listened to radio news
of Japanese in Nanking, Madrid on fire,
Hitler's brownshirts *heiling*. The hurricane
of 1938 ripped down the biggest maple.
Then I was twelve and could work the fields.

When I moved back to the house in middle age,
I was no farmer. I was writer and grandfather,
then widower. The solitary maple took the sky,
hurling its orange fire in the late-August air.

Sixty years after the swing, a lofty half-dead tree
drops branches on the grass. I call tree people
to tear out dead limbs for next year's sake,
fearing the wind and ice storms of winter,
dreading broken trees, and bones, and cities.

—*Donald Hall*

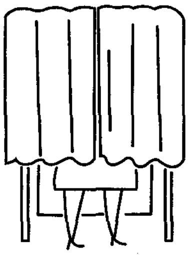
his death, in 1998. The money, Taylor said, was buried in a hole on a cacao farm, and the friend wanted to transfer it to Lagos and exchange it for naira. “ ‘It is too risky,’ ” Taylor said that he told his friend. “ ‘You can’t bring that much money to Lagos.’ ” Hesitantly, circuitously, Taylor arrived at his offer—a bank-to-bank transfer to my account. I had seen it coming and gently suggested that this was a dirty, dangerous business that neither of us would want any part of. Taylor backed off. “Wisdom is more important than money,” he announced as I escorted him out. Still, a business opportunity in the form of an American had come his way, and he would have been regarded locally as a fool if he hadn’t tried to exploit it. We said goodbye amicably, but he avoided my eyes.

The government that came to power in the democratic elections of 1999 has begun to revive the old master plan for Lagos. “We hope that, in the new plan, there will be a program for the poor people, to get affordable housing for them,” Oyesanya Oyelola, the state planning official, said. Conditions in Lagos have marginally improved since the restoration of civilian rule. The traffic jams have eased slightly with new roads, and trash removal has increased. One Saturday each month, the city shuts down and every homeowner or business owner is responsible for cleaning his property; the results are startling, for a few hours, anyway.

Bola Tinubu, the city’s governor, told me that when he was elected, in 1999, the scale of the task overwhelmed him. “Sky-high refuse!” he said. “It was a disaster area. It’s like a hurricane has just gone through Lagos state, on a daily basis.” He went on, “Now, compared to a serious civilization, Lagos state is dirty, very dirty. But, to an average Lagosian, it’s clean compared to what they faced before.”

I met the Governor in his large, gilt-trimmed flat on New Cavendish Street, in central London. Heavy-lidded and barefoot, wearing jeans and a striped T-shirt and sunk into an overstuffed sofa, Tinubu seemed to be temporarily convalescing from the job. I gave him the letter from the Maroko Evictees Committee; he cited his achievements in employment and housing creation, on an annual budget of three quarters of a billion dollars, and he blamed the federal government—which is based in Abuja, two hundred and fifty miles to the northeast, and has long had a hostile relationship with Lagos—for politically motivated financial neglect. “I need ten times what I’m having today,” Tinubu said. “The money that Lagos state is having is not enough to maintain a county hospital in New York.” The Governor, who once worked for Mobil Oil and for Deloitte, the accounting firm, brought out the report of a consultant hired to draw up a new master plan. It was much the same as the old, neglected one. The key, Tinubu said, is “to arrest the unplanned growth in different directions, the octopus of unplanned and uncontrolled building.” In London, the Governor sounded optimistic. He presented Lagos, with its phenomenal annual growth rate, as a victim of its own success.

Folarin Gbadebo-Smith, the local government chairman, was less sanguine. His district, eastern Lagos Island, includes extremes of wealth and poverty. A big man with a deep, self-confident voice, he is the son of middle-class Lagosians, and a dentist by trade. He spent years working hard and falling farther behind as the naira lost its value and the city descended into the corruption of military rule. Finally, after the restoration of democracy, he decided that it was time to stop complaining and do something. He ran for office in 2003 and now manages a district of seventy thousand people, installing public toilets and bus shelters, rebuilding primary schools, cleaning up streets, juggling the “diametrically opposed” interests of his rich and poor constituents, and, as he put it, “trying to maintain some sense of order.” He compared Lagos unfavorably with Rio de Janeiro, where, he said, “in the city center there is strict law enforcement. Here, the problem is everything is happening everywhere.”

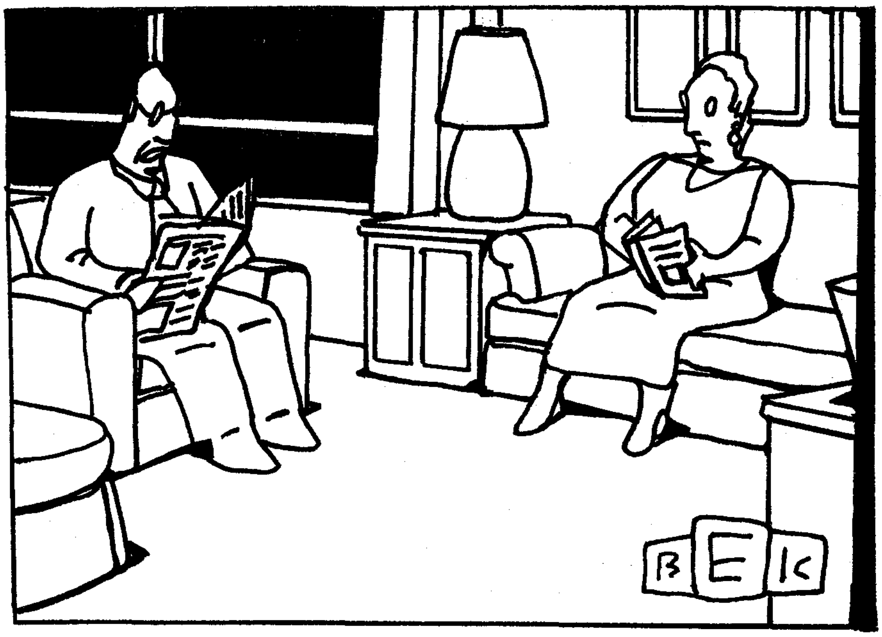


We drove in his Land Rover to a parking lot next to a filthy police barracks, under an overpass leading to Victoria Island. Gbadebo-Smith had a plan to turn the lot into a nighttime market for venders and motorcycle-taxi drivers.

The owner of the lot, Jacob Wood, joined us for a walk around it. “Security should be very tough,” he said. He seemed eager to coöperate but skeptical of the plan.

“It will be tough,” Gbadebo-Smith agreed. He promised that the night market, with food stalls and music, would close at midnight. The real purpose of the project was to clear out the helter-skelter buying and selling in a neighborhood that was, by Lagos standards, upscale. “Get people off the street and give them something more organized,” Gbadebo-Smith said. “The first thing is to control who comes, because we can’t have the whole town coming here. We’d have to give sellers a license, so I can detect anyone who isn’t a resident of this place. I will aggressively pursue anyone selling on the street, and if necessary put them in jail.”

Gbadebo-Smith’s plan is part of the Kick Against Indiscipline, a citywide effort to rationalize Lagos—for example, to clear out the informal markets clogging nearly every street, with mobile courts issuing fines. The sawmills, whose smoke smothers traffic on the Third Mainland Bridge, are slated for removal to a site on the far side of the lagoon; the floating slum by the bridge is to be demolished and its fishermen residents sent to new residences on the north shore; the scrap yards and stolen-goods markets in Ijora are to be relocated westward. Government officials talk of providing housing and job training to the displaced, to keep them anchored to their new neighborhoods. But I found it hard to imagine Gbadebo-Smith ever bringing order to his district. The hawkers would inevitably return to the traffic circles, for the same reason that hundreds of thousands of people continue to come to Lagos year after year. The concentration of humanity brings work, which further intensifies the concentration. When I mentioned the Kick Against Indiscipline to Paul Okunlola, of the *Guardian*, he said, “It will never work. This is the only way people can make ends meet. Wherever there’s a



"He died alone with his family."

• •

traffic jam, you will see venders there. They're like sprouts. You can't get rid of them."

The most widely available commodity in Lagos is garbage. It is an engine of growth in the underworld of the city's informal economy, a vast sector with an astonishing volume of supply.

Babatunde Ilufoye, an Ibo in his early forties, was brought to Lagos at the age of eighteen, by a German man whose flat tire Ilufoye had fixed one day in his village, and who decided to teach the young man the import-export business. Today, Ilufoye lives near the sawmills, in the shabby-genteel district of Ebute-Meta, where there are many three-story colonial-era buildings in various stages of neglect. He is a polite, neatly dressed, hardworking man, whose wife owns a drygoods shop next to the house; in a European city, Ilufoye would be a successful entrepreneur. In 2004, after visiting a Lagos friend who dealt in cow horns and hooves, he went to an Internet café and typed those words into Google. Nothing useful appeared, but, when he entered "plastic scraps," thousands of links came up.

Ilufoye is now a full-time exporter of recycled hard plastics, selling the ground-up fragments to Indian and South African companies for a minimum of a hundred dollars a ton. In choosing plastics, Ilufoye tapped into a growth market, but Nigeria's international reputation as a breeding ground for online scam artists makes it difficult for him to find customers, and he can't move the product fast enough to become profitable. "Do you expect me to commit a crime at this age and be locked up?" he e-mailed one wary Pakistani buyer. "If I'm not a fool at twenty-one or thirty, how can I be a fool now?"

Ilufoye's grinder is Andrew Okolie, a gloomy man who operates two crushing machines in a gloomy concrete building under an expressway. The narrow rooms are filled to the ceilings with dirty plastic kitchenware, pails, milk cartons, empty bottles of shampoo, carwash fluid, cosmetic gels, all pouring out of open doorways in little landslides. When I visited, the power had been out for days and Okolie sat idle in the front room, chewing hard on a piece of gum. Like Ilufoye, he is frustrated by structural limitations: he could handle a capacity of one ton a day, but he can't afford a generator to keep his machines running during the frequent outages. Unless you are rich and connected, the banks charge as much as thirty-per-cent interest on loans, he said. To upgrade his business, Okolie needed someone to invest twenty thousand dollars, which he said he would be able to pay back in two years—because plastic is "in vogue these days." The business was poised to take off, and Ilufoye and Okolie could put many youths to work. But nobody would help them realize their plan.

In the recycling business, Okolie said, most of the suppliers are "dropouts, miscreants"—scavenger boys who scour the gutters and streets and municipal dumps, filling up sacks or carts, and sell what they collect to their *oga*, who has twenty or so boys working for him, in a kind of dependency that resembles that of Fagin and the pickpockets of "Oliver Twist." The *oga*, in turn, sells the refuse to Okolie, who then sells the ground bits to Ilufoye, who exports them. The scavengers, who are called pickers, can collect two or three hundred pounds of plastic a week, for which they are paid six cents per pound. They spend most of their cash, according to Okolie, on marijuana or glue.

Half a dozen miles north of Andrew Okolie's plastics-grinding shop, along the expressway, is the largest municipal dump in Lagos. The first time I visited, a line of trucks stretched from the dumping area to the highway. One badly overloaded truck had tipped over on the entrance road and taken down another, and the mound of garbage left by the spill made it difficult for other trucks to move past. On the entrance road, I met a young plastics picker named Ayo Adio, who had arrived by standing on the back of a garbage truck. He carried a nylon sack, into which he was dropping scraps of plastic from the roadside with a piece of steel rebar bent into a hook. Adio's expression was grim, and he had smeared white lotion across his face, which made him look like a mournful clown. I noticed that other pickers wore plastic masks or face cloths. At the approach to the dump site, the smell of burning rot became overpowering.

Hundreds of pickers were trudging across an undulating landscape of garbage. Every minute, another dump truck backed in and released its load, with a tremendous sliding noise culminating in a crash that shook the trash underfoot. As a bulldozer pushed the fresh garbage up into a wave that crested and broke across the older landfill, the pickers rushed over it, swarming dangerously close to the vehicles. Bent under their sacks, they worked quickly and with focus, knowing what they were looking for. Some pickers wanted only copper; others specialized in printer cartridges. One man inspected a wheel axle for half a minute before tossing it aside. A girl sold water from a bucket on her head. Most of the scavengers had closed shoes and some kind of headwear, but only a few wore rubber boots and gloves. They all clawed at the trash with bent rebar, sharpened with use to a shiny point.

A fifty-year-old man with squinting red eyes named Moshood Babatunde, who was wearing a baseball cap and an impossibly clean white shirt, paused to talk with me. He had been working at this dump for fifteen years, collecting wire. On a good day, he said, he made two and a half or three dollars. But, because of the soaring rents in Lagos, he had to commute by train and bus to the dump site from a neighboring state, which cost him almost two dollars a day. He supported five children, three of them in school. "If you don't find some help, you have to help yourself," he said. "I thank God, I will never regret this opportunity."

The dump—a hole gouged out of the earth—is as broad as a small town, and surrounded on all sides by fifty-foot cliffs composed of laterite and garbage. We were standing at the edge of one such cliff, and the pickers took turns pushing their full sacks over the edge, sending them bouncing down to the bottom and then scurrying after them. Across the floor of the pit are hundreds of hovels, a sizable shantytown of dwellings made of plastic sheeting and scrap metal bound together with baling wire. A thousand pickers live down in the pit, among flocks of white cowbirds, and middlemen come to buy their stock. The pickers have built a mosque and a church, and at Christmas they celebrate by decorating their shacks.

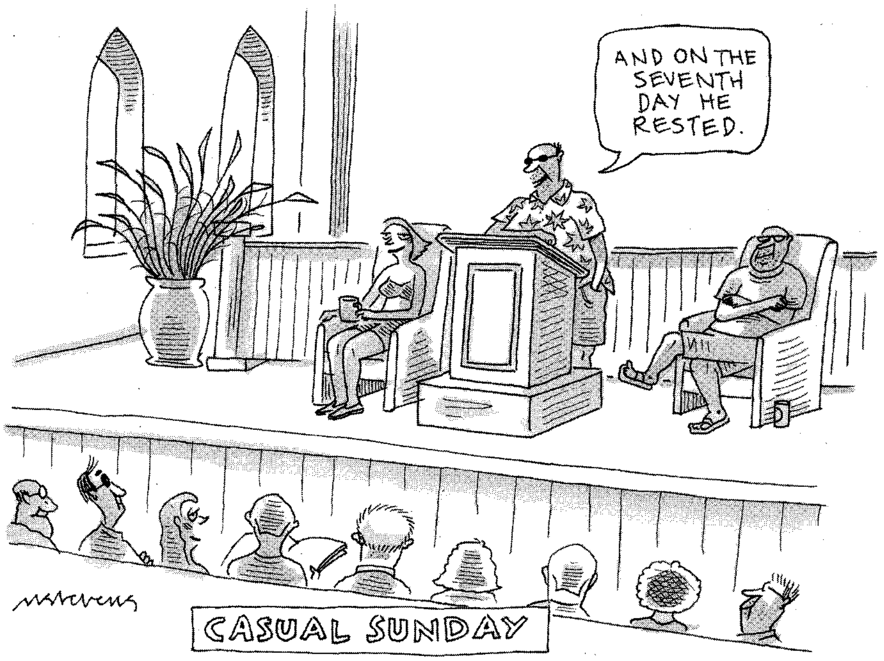
"It is somewhere between the law of the jungle and civilization," Aremu Hakeem, a municipal worker with a master's degree, who escorted me across the dump site, said. "They have an organization, a chairman, rules and regulations. But the physically stronger prevail when the trucks come." Hakeem spoke excitedly about recent improvements to the dump, including the opening of the entrance road. He had read books about landfills and checked out garbage-related Web sites. He was extremely proud of the dump, which he called a "reference point" for all of Nigeria. Then he gazed out over the site and grew quiet. "Someday I would like to come to your country and use what I have here," he said, pointing to his head. "Here we are not using it very much."

In an essay called "Fragments of a Lecture on Lagos," Rem Koolhaas described how his team, on its first visit to the city, was too intimidated to leave its car. Eventually, the group rented the Nigerian President's helicopter and was granted a more reassuring view:

> From the air, the apparently burning garbage heap turned out to be, in fact, a village, an urban phenomenon with a highly organized community living on its crust. . . . What seemed, on ground level, an accumulation of dysfunctional movements, seemed from above an impressive performance, evidence of how well Lagos might perform if it were the third largest city in the world.

The impulse to look at an "apparently burning garbage heap" and see an "urban phenomenon," and then make it the raw material of an elaborate aesthetic construct, is not so different from the more common impulse not to look at all. And that reaction is understandable, for the human misery of Lagos not only overwhelms one's senses and sympathy but also seems irreversible. Koolhaas's words reminded me of something that Gbadebo-Smith told me. "You're aware of the 'megacity' thing," he said. "Lagosians sometimes talk about it as a trophy. As far as I'm concerned, it's an impending disaster." The vision of twenty-three million people squeezed together and trying to survive, like creatures in a mad demographer's experiment gone badly wrong, fills Gbadebo-Smith with foreboding. "We have a massive growth in population with a stagnant or shrinking economy," he said. "Picture this city ten, twenty years from now. This is not the urban poor—this is the new urban *destitute*." He expressed surprise that the level of crime and ethnic violence in Lagos, let alone civil insurrection, is still relatively contained. "We're sitting on a powder keg here," he said. "If we don't address this question of economic growth, and I mean vigorously, there is no doubt as to what's going to happen here eventually. It's just going to boil over." He added, "And guess what? If all this fails, the world will feel the weight of Lagos not working out."

There is an even darker possibility: that the world won't feel the weight of it much at all. The really disturbing thing about Lagos's pickers and venders is that their lives have essentially nothing to do with ours. They scavenge an existence beyond the margins of macroeconomics. They are, in the harsh terms of globalization, superfluous. ♦


AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE RESTED.
mstevens
CASUAL SUNDAY

PROFILES

SEEING THINGS

The art of Olafur Eliasson.

BY CYNTHIA ZARIN

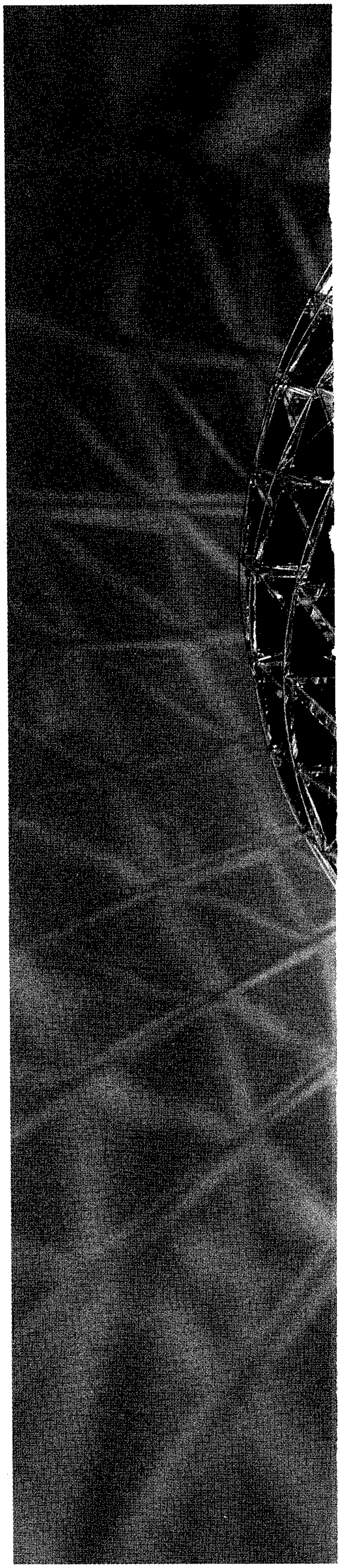
One cool wet afternoon at the end of April, a dozen people stood in a round, foil-lined room in the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, in Chelsea, looking at a large piece of black plastic. Most of them were young, their clothes were splattered with white paint, and their faces registered equal parts exhaustion and consternation. They murmured to one another in German. A few yards away, through the open door of the freight entrance, rain blew in. The opening of a show by the Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson was in less than twenty-four hours, and the major piece—a circular wooden pool, a foot deep and eighteen feet across—was proving problematic: the black plastic lining was bunching up and drifting. It looked as if a small pilot whale were breaching the surface.

Eliasson stood apart from the group. As a teen-ager, he was the break-dancing champion of Scandinavia; at thirty-nine, he is a physically economical man of few gestures, one of which is to push back a forelock of rusty brown hair which often falls into his face. Dressed in blue-jeans, a white shirt, and an anorak, Eliasson had the slightly crumpled look of a shop teacher at a progressive school. His glasses were fogged. He said, "This needs to hold water in twenty-four hours. Any ideas?"

This was Eliasson's tenth-anniversary show with the gallery, and he stayed in New York for a week to oversee its installation—a testament to his regard for Tanya Bonakdar, a precise, elegant Englishwoman in her early forties, who manages almost all aspects of his career. ("Tanya and I grew up together," he says.) He had come with five assistants from East Berlin, where, in a studio housed in an old train depot, he employs up to forty people, including mathematicians, technicians, carpenters, and architects, most under the age of thirty-five. Daniel Birnbaum, the director of the Stadelschule art academy, in Frankfurt, some of whose students have gone on to work for Eliasson, describes the people he picks as "brilliant" and "crazy."

This year, Eliasson has had twelve solo shows around the world. His best-known work is "The Weather Project" (2003), an installation in the vast Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern, in London, which consisted of a gigantic half sun—made of hundreds of light bulbs—at the top of one wall, mirrors on the ceiling, and a mist machine. Rather than trying to minimize the space, Eliasson doubled it: the mirrors created the top half of the sun and extended the space vertically, while the mist, pumped into the hall at regular intervals, refracted the light and, like London fog, made distances between points curiously unfathomable. The effect was what one critic called "a romantic indoor weather scene." Open for six months, it was visited by more than two million people. Next fall, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will mount a major survey of Eliasson's work, titled "Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson," which will then travel to New York, to the Museum of Modern Art, with an annex of the show at P.S. 1, in Queens. Madeleine Grynsztejn, SFMOMA's chief curator of painting and sculpture, met Eliasson in Berlin in 1997. "He had a little studio space. He had a few four-by-five photographs of men fishing in Iceland," she recalled. "It was clear to me at that moment that Olafur represented immersion in experience. You could feel the cold in your fingertips."

Later that day, in Chelsea, I sat with Eliasson at a diner on Tenth Avenue. He speaks Icelandic, Danish, German, and English; in English, his voice is measured, colloquial, and lilting. He said, "A show like this comes out of the



Eliasson in his studio: "One could draw more or less compelling lines between the history of identity and the history of sensational spaces." Photograph by André Rival.

laboratory. It's not about foil and water. It's about how we feel about those things. The pool is a machine that can produce a phenomenon, but I'm very aware that it can come close to being a setup." His genial features sharpened. "Working on the idea of experience is something intimate. Speaking with you, now, will change the way I see when I return to the gallery." He called the Chelsea show "Your engagement sequence," or "YES." (For a number of years, he has used the word "Your" in his exhibition titles, to emphasize the primacy of the viewer's experience.)

In Berlin, Eliasson discusses all works with his staff—when I met him last spring, there were more than fifty potential projects on his list. A design for a thirty-foot-high double-spiral staircase, shaped like a Möbius strip—you enter it at the bottom and walk up and down in a continuous loop—which is on permanent display in a courtyard in Munich, necessitated, by Eliasson's estimate, more than a hundred conversations with Sebastian Behmann, the chief architect in the studio. To Eliasson, those talks—in which they considered the idea of what a stair might be, the history of stairs, the expectation of where a stair might lead—were part of the finished piece.

Eliasson invites comparison to Buckminster Fuller, with whom he shares an interest in the aesthetics and the utility of mathematical forms, and to the artists Robert Irwin and James Turrell and the idea of "seeing yourself seeing." Like them, he is interested in light, to which he adds a preoccupation with what he calls "the intersection of nature, science, and human perception." But unlike those artists, who tend to draw the viewer's attention to natural phenomena—Turrell's "sky spaces," for example, showcase the open sky—Eliasson consistently uses mechanical artifice to create his effects in art interventions, photographs, installations, and exhibitions that are often more like optical experiments than art shows.

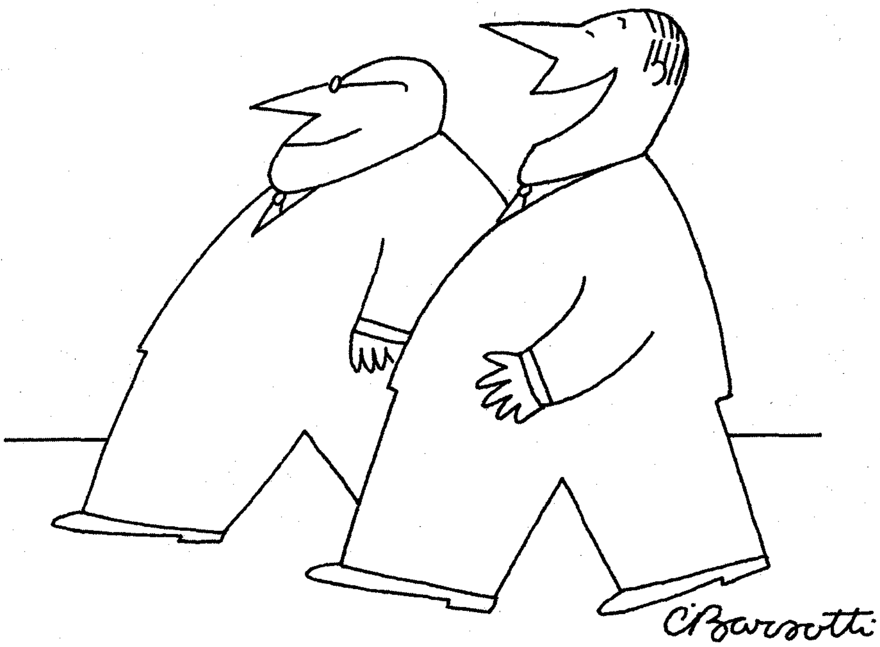
There are some, friends as well as critics, who worry that Eliasson may overextend himself. Robert Irwin told me, "He's going about it at an amazing pace—he's pulling off huge projects!—but he's going to have to focus." He added, "I watch Olafur having forty-odd people feed him all these ideas—it looks incredibly rich. In a way, I'm envious. On the other hand, I'm thinking, *Sheesh*, just the idea of having to support all that, emotionally, financially, managerially. I'm rooting for him. I'm enamored. It's a new generation. The air travel alone would kill me."

This week, Louis Vuitton will unveil a holiday window designed by Eliasson—in which an eye-shaped lamp will project yellow light onto the street—first in New York and then in more than three hundred stores worldwide. He told me that the money he earns from the commission will help support 121Ethiopia.org, a fund for Ethiopian orphans that Eliasson has established with his wife, Marianne Krogh Jensen, a Danish art historian. They adopted their son, Zakarias, who is now three, in Addis Ababa; in a few weeks they will adopt a second child, a five-month-old girl, there. Eliasson often brings himself up short and spins the conversation. Walking back to the gallery, he said, "So, what do we do? Should the notice of the foundation be in the window? Will noting the foundation change the viewer's perception of the project? Am I using the foundation to project myself? You can ask Bono! People say, 'Oh, you're selling out!' But that's naïve."

He stopped to look at children's books in a shopwindow. Last spring, between working in Berlin and travelling, he spent just a couple of weeks each month in Copenhagen, where he lives with his family. The day before, on the telephone, Zakarias had asked him, for the first time, to come home. Eliasson said, "In my family, everyone was a fisherman. The men were never with the children. Now, I see, my life is exactly like that."

The day after the Chelsea opening, a major work by Eliasson, titled "Your wave is," opened in Venice, at the Palazzo Grassi, a late-Baroque building on the Grand Canal which houses an art exhibition space. Eliasson had designed an intricate web of light cable—its geometric pattern a mathematical translation of how ripples move—which was draped over the face of the Grassi and cast silver reflections onto the water. (The piece recalled the Venetian custom of hanging tapestries from palace balconies during festivals.) "Your wave is" was commissioned by the French retail billionaire François Pinault, who recently bought the Palazzo Grassi in order to display his own collections there. He was disappointed when he discovered that Eliasson would not be at the opening. Eliasson said sheepishly, "I was there two days ago. It looked super nice."

"Your wave is" was the second Eliasson installation on show in Venice this year. The first was "Your black horizon," which the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation commissioned for the Biennale. Half a mile out in the lagoon, on the island of San Lazzaro, Eli-



"Oh, that's good, sir, that's very good—'What if they gave a war and nobody profited.'"

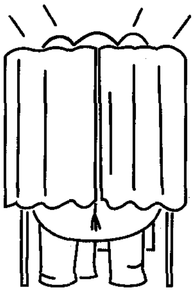
asson set up a thousand-foot-long, two-inch-wide "horizon line"—an LED strip that ran around the interior of a temporary pavilion designed by the London-based architect David Adjaye. Inside, it was completely dark, except for the horizon line. By a process of photon duplication, the light in Venice, recorded from dawn to dusk on a single day, travelled along the LED strip, at eye level, repeating every twelve minutes.

The evening before the opening, while his assistants went off to a Home Depot in search of a solution to the pool-rigging problem, Eliasson had dinner in SoHo with his friends Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, who were the architects, with Charles Renfro, of the new Institute of Contemporary Art, in Boston. Diller and Scofidio's interests are akin to Eliasson's—at the 2002 Swiss Expo, their entry, "Blur Building," was shrouded in mist—and they are among the few people he sees socially in New York. For an hour before dinner, he had talked to Scofidio, who is an amateur race-car driver, about cars. (Whenever Eliasson is working on a project—in this case, a commission from BMW to design an "Art Car," an artistic conception of a new hydrogen-powered car—his first impulse is to pull everyone around him into the initial inquiry.) The couple had recently returned from Venice, where they had gone to see "Your black horizon." At the restaurant, Diller beamed at him. "Everything you wanted to happen, happened," she said. "We spent a lot of time there. It was scary. It was an essay. It was sublime. You are one of the only people whose work makes us jealous."

Eliasson, who in almost any situation is self-effacing and preternaturally attentive to small gestures of protocol, was clearly moved. He said, "Thank you for going. Thank you for saying these things." He took a drink, and then told them about the Palazzo Grassi, adding, "The opening is tomorrow."

Diller laughed and said, "You're like McDonald's."

The next day, I met Eliasson for breakfast at his hotel in Chelsea. After dinner, he had taken his crew out drinking until 2 A.M. It was a cold, bright morning, but inside the restaurant it was dim. Eliasson said, "In Iceland, seventy-five per cent of the time that the sun is up the shadow is longer than the object causing it." With his hands, he made an arc in the air, then brought them down to a skimming stop—the only time Eliasson uses body language to describe something is when he speaks about Iceland. "In Iceland, everything is such a drama. A little rock in a field casts a long shadow. The shadow personalizes the body." He added, "In northern mythology—look at Münch—it's all about shadows or it's about painted objects. One could draw more or less compelling lines between the history of identity and the history of sensational spaces."



He was due at a meeting uptown, and I returned to the gallery. Now a curving ramp led into the darkened, round room—it was like entering a giant snail shell. The bottom of the pool now seemed to disappear. At the center of the pool was a light bulb housed in a small wooden pergola. Underneath, the light was connected to a fulcrum, which was attached by a long wooden lever to the ramp. The idea was that as you stepped on the ramp to enter the room your footfall would activate the lever, the water would ripple, and light shining on those ripples would cast wavy bands of light on the foil walls.

It worked. The wavering lines my footsteps made began to settle into small ripples of silvery light. Soon, one of Eliasson's assistants came in—a young man with a heavy tread—and then two women who worked for Bonakdar, and the waves on the walls started again, large waves with smaller lines arcing underneath. To enter the room was to become a penny thrown into a pool. As in almost all of Eliasson's installations, the rigging—the ramp, the lever, the fulcrum—was uncomplicated. An ancillary pleasure of the experience—what some critics have called the "Aha!" factor—was seeing how it worked.

When I asked Christian Uchtmann, one of Eliasson's assistants, who had solved the problem with the pool, he looked at me quizzically, and answered, "No one. Everyone."

Since 2001, Eliasson's studio has been situated in a former train depot behind Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof museum of contemporary art. The door is unmarked, but next to it are three buzzers: one for Eliasson, the others for Tacita Dean and Thomas Demand, the artists with whom he rents the space. Eliasson comes out of the twentieth-century Nordic presumption that art and design—Arne Jacobsen chairs, Dansk tableware, Marimekko textiles, Alvar Aalto buildings—are integral to how people perceive and inhabit their surroundings. The open space of the fifteen-thousand-square-foot studio is on three levels. On the first floor, most of the larger prototypes and objects are made, and there are offices for the assistants who plan his schedule and handle his finances and for the architects, mathematicians, and graphic artists (his studio produces a couple of books a year) who work with him. There is also a kitchen and a dining table. In the basement, most of the tinkering and the experiments with light occur, mainly in a light-box room, whose ceiling panel can be programmed to emit different light frequencies. On a mezzanine above the first-floor space, assistant architects sit at computer terminals and work on specific projects.

The studio director is Felix Tristan Hallwachs, a twenty-nine-year-old German who previously worked for an architectural firm. The first time I visited the studio, Eliasson, who was due in later, had asked Hallwachs to show me around. On the first floor, against one wall, was a plywood maquette of an interior wall for the Oslo Opera House, which, during intermissions, will change hue from green to white, though the afterimage of green on the viewer's retina will register the white light as reddish or purple. In the far corner sat a silver skeleton of the hydrogen-powered BMW that Eliasson is designing. A dozen assistants milled around, making coffee, painting prototypes, adjusting light bulbs. Hallwachs said, "On the one hand, the studio is about creating and making things, and on the other it's about going off on tangents. People ask, 'What does Olafur do if there are so many people here?' But he is involved in everything." Hallwachs looked at me and said, "This is not a place to do your own work."

A table was littered with sketches of a geodesic dome that will be built outside the studio to house the BMW. In the center of the studio, like a gigantic praying mantis, stood a six-foot-high harmonograph. A suspended pen with a light-diode tip was set up so that when it was released it drew pictures in the air; a digital camera recorded the path of light that the pen drew in space. The light frequencies of these ethereal figures were then translated into sound waves. Each picture depicted a musical chord; they looked like star nebulae. Eliasson made a simplified version of the machine last spring for a show in Berlin. When visitors put it in motion, the pen drew with ink on paper. (The results looked a little like what happens when you play around with a Spirograph.) The drawing was then stamped "WASTE OF TIME."

Downstairs, in the light-box room, the ceiling panel was running through a spectrum of light from graphite to dove gray—standing in the room was like being inside an opal. Eliasson was considering lighting a series of paintings by Wassily Kandinsky, in which he would cast each work in the daylight of the place where it was made. (An Austrian lighting company funded the project, and it is currently part of a show at Munich's Lenbachhaus museum.) Frank Haugwitz, who has worked with Eliasson for three years, showed me some samples of replicated daylight. He hit a switch and said, "Daylight here in Berlin is very blue." The room filled with pale light the color of skimmed milk. Then he hit another switch, and the tint deepened. He said, "Here is a cloudy day. Almost aquamarine."

About ten yards away, four or five people, among them Sebastian Behmann, stood around a freezer chest, peering at some frozen nylon string and a piece of icy fishnet. (Eliasson, who takes Behmann on most of his trips abroad, told me, "Sebastian could organize the Olympics with a pencil and a coffee cup.") Behmann said, "Olafur is interested in what happens to certain materials when they are frozen at very low temperatures. This nylon can become as strong as steel. This has implications for space travel: you could bring netting into space, instead of steel girders, for example."

Is that going to happen? I asked.

Behmann shrugged, and said, "No."

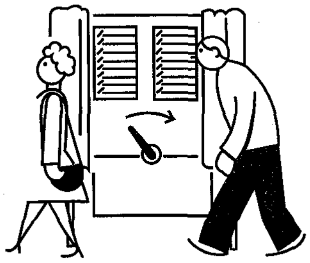
Then why do it? I asked.

"It's fun. So now we are building a big refrigerator for the car. Ice is more fun than no ice."

Eliasson arrived at noon. Because he had recently given his own desk to Hallwachs, he had nowhere to sit. He perched beside Petra Rickhof, who keeps his schedule, and flipped through an auction catalogue of Scandinavian furniture. He stopped at a pear-wood cabinet from the early twentieth century, called "For the Things I Hold Dear." Eliasson passed the catalogue to me, and said, "I love this. What I like about this furniture is that I'm not doing it."

For the next hour, he moved around the studio. He tried out different bulbs in a chandelier that was threaded with multicolored braided cords. It looked like a Day-Glo Medusa. He held up a braid and smiled: "You should know I made it myself before you say you hate it," he said. (Sales of lamps, photographs, and prints help support the studio—one large light fixture recently sold for more than a hundred thousand dollars.) Upstairs, on the office mezzanine, he checked on a proposal for an outdoor performance space and meeting place at Bard College, which, if it is built, will be his first major permanent work in the United States. Andreas Eggertsen, a twenty-five-year-old Swede, was working on the drawings. Although Eliasson had not been to the site for months, he said, after a glance, "I think the rocks are further from the site than you have drawn them." He added, "I want to plant flowering trees around the pool. For one week in May, the petals will drop and cover the water. It will be the pool's performance festival."

It was lunchtime. Asako Iwama, a Japanese artist, is the studio's cook. Once, in Tokyo, with a dozen renegade artists, she hung mobiles of food and utensils throughout the city. "We were tired of the boring idea of art as a commodity," she told me, setting out plates. In the refrigerator was a box of Mars bars, with a sign on it that said "Leave a euro for Ethiopia." (Eliasson laments, "They never leave the euro!")



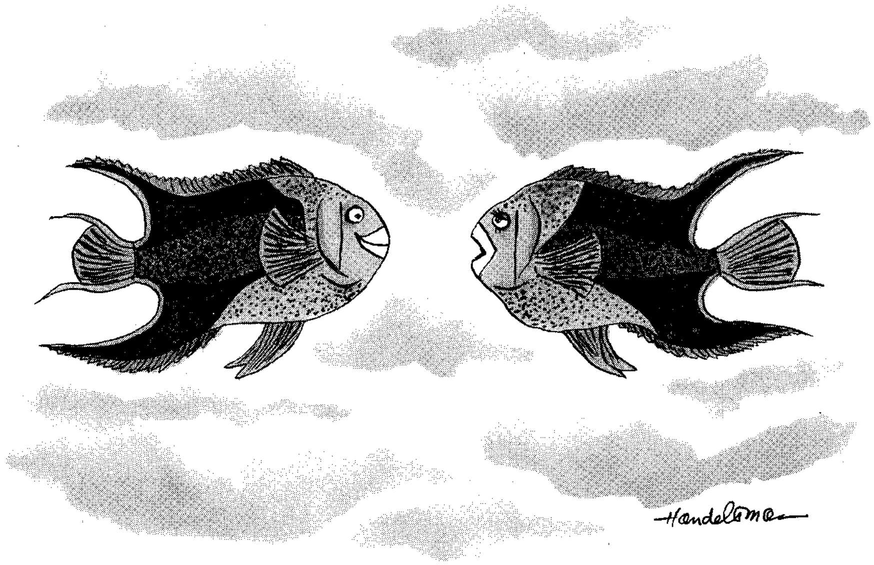
About twenty-five people pulled chairs up to a trestle table on the train platform outside the studio. There was an archery target at the end of the platform—when Eliasson is stuck in his work, he shoots arrows. The strip of grass alongside the platform was greener in some spots than in others. In March, for a show in Berlin, Eliasson had imported small icebergs from Iceland's Jökulsárlón glacier lake; Neugerriemschneider, his Berlin gallery, was turned into the equivalent of a meat locker for the occasion. The icebergs, which were several thousand years old, showed natural striations of pink and violet, indicating weather changes over the millennia. After the show, they were brought here to melt on the grass. Tim Neuger, the co-owner of the gallery, told me, "Collectors can buy a certificate, which means that they can have the show assembled for them at any time in the next ten years. They will build a container themselves, and keep the ice. For people who are going to buy this, the electric bill isn't going to bother them."

Petra Rickhof mentioned to Eliasson that the coming Thursday was the Feast of the Ascension. The crew looked at him. He laughed. "Nope, no holiday. But for lunch we could have cake." He turned to me and said, sotto voce, "We always have carrot cake. Anything beyond carrot cake and the work fucks up."

Olafur Eliasson's parents, Elias Hjorleifsson and Ingibjorg Olafsdottir, emigrated to Copenhagen from Iceland in 1966, he to find work as a cook, and she as a seamstress. They were both twenty. Eliasson's mother is from an Icelandic fishing family that can be traced back to the eleventh century. His father's family was part of Reykjavík's small artistic circle: Eliasson's grandmother was a photographer and presided over a lively salon; his grandfather was a publisher of avant-garde literature, who abandoned the family.

Olafur was born in Copenhagen in

1967. When he was four, his parents divorced; he lived with his mother and his stepfather, a stockbroker. (Ingibjorg, a custom dressmaker, now lives in a sixteenth-century house near Copenhagen.) On weekends, he saw his father, who made art in his spare time, and Olafur's strongest memory of childhood is being in the studio with him. Eliasson recalls, "He did everything from watercolors to fossil renderings." In the late seventies, Elias moved back to Iceland, and Olafur spent summers with him there. The Icelandic landscape, with its stark contrasts, long summer days, and dramatic horizon line would inform almost all his later work. Elias worked as a cook on a fishing boat, and was away for weeks at a time. He set up a studio on the boat, where one of his projects was to suspend a pen over a piece of paper so that the rocking of the waves made drawings—a prototype of the harmonograph.



"So I leave eggs on the ground, and then you come along and drop your whatever on them? That's your idea of romance?"

By the time Olafur was fourteen, he says, he could draw every bone in the human body. That year, he saw break dancing for the first time on TV, and he was entranced. With two school friends, he formed a group—they called themselves the Harlem Gun Crew—and, wearing silver-spandex costumes made by his mother, they performed at clubs and dance halls for four years, and won the Scandinavian championship. He recalls, "It really gave me a quite particular idea of space, and an obsession with how the body moves within that space."

In 1987, Eliasson's grandfather killed himself, in Copenhagen. The same year, Eliasson's father, who had remarried, was hospitalized for alcoholism. Olafur returned to Iceland to help care for his two-year-old half sister, Anna Viktoria, and he decided to apply to the Royal Danish Academy of Art. He submitted five pieces. One was a circular black tombstone. "Because I had so much time, I lacquered it *one hundred times*. It was not a particularly exceptional piece of art. But it was the end of the eighties, and I got into art school."

The academy gave him a travel budget, and in 1990 he came to New York, living first in Williamsburg and then on Thompson Street. He worked as a studio assistant and began to read widely. He was deeply affected by the work of the phenomenologist philosophers, especially Edmund Husserl—with their emphasis on the individual experience of reality—and by Lawrence Weschler's biography of Robert Irwin, "Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees." But he didn't seriously begin making art until 1993, when he moved to Cologne, which was then rapidly becoming the center of contemporary art in Europe. He took jobs hanging shows at galleries and started experimenting with installations, showing some of his work at the Lukas and Hoffman gallery. His father had recovered, and he began discussing his work with him. (Elias sometimes cooked for Olafur's openings—once, he smoked a lamb and served it in a gallery—and their collaboration continued until his death, from pulmonary fibrosis, four years ago.) Galleries could submit new artists for a "talent booth" at the Cologne Art Fair, and, in 1993, Lukas and Hoffman entered Eliasson, who responded by covering a wall of the booth with moss he had imported from Iceland. With the addition of a spotlight, a black plastic bag, and a mirror, he created an illuminated grotto with a reflecting pool that filled, steadily, with droplets of water. Tim Neuger recalls, "It was a meditational piece. It was quiet. I went to a dinner, and everyone was talking about it."

A few months later, Eliasson had his first solo show in Cologne, in a rented garage behind a movie theatre. Again, with just a few pieces of hardware—a garden hose, a mister, and a light bulb—he created something at once ordinary and transcendent: an indoor rainbow. The show was called "Beauty." Neuger says, "From the beginning, he was deconstructing beauty. He was showing how stupid and simple beauty can be. And you saw yourself seeing it." In 1994, Eliasson moved to East Berlin and signed on with Neuger's gallery. Eliasson told me, "It was cheap. I knew a lot of people. In Berlin, you got a flat, you were invited, and something happened, immediately."

He had his first solo show in New York in 1996, at Tanya Bonakdar, and, in 1998, in Sweden, he gained international attention with a guerrilla-art intervention, "The Green River," in which he poured a bucketful of a nontoxic substance used by biologists to track water currents into one of Stockholm's rivers, dyeing it bright green. Describing the event to a group of collectors at a meeting arranged by MOMA, Eliasson said, "That day, when the people in Stockholm looked at the river—to them, that the water moved was a surprise. The city wasn't a postcard! Not knowing it was an art work was important. If people knew beforehand there wouldn't be the same discussion." (Eliasson abandoned guerrilla-art interventions after 2001, because of the possibility that they could cause panic.)

Some of Eliasson's work has at times met with opposition: in 1999, in Utrecht, Holland, for a piece named "Double Sunset," he erected a bright-yellow, forty-foot-wide corrugated metal sun on the roof of a coffee warehouse on the west side of the city, so that, in the evening, to people driving into the city from the east it looked as if two suns of the same size were setting simultaneously. There were protests that Utrecht's poorer residents, many of whom live in the west of the city, were left with the back view of the huge false sun. When I asked Eliasson about it, he said, "The sun sets in the west. There was nothing I could do about it. End of story!"

The Tate Modern offered him the Turbine Hall commission in 2001. (Anish Kapoor and Louise Bourgeois had previously completed projects in the space.) Thomas Demand, who has known Eliasson since his early days in Cologne, says, "The Tate thing was incredibly brave. He was an artist in a circus working without a net. If it had gone wrong it would have ruined his career. But he made the space human." Visitors lay on the floor and watched their reflections in the ceiling mirrors, sometimes for hours, as the mist came and went. After a while, people began spelling out words with their bodies, which could be read on the ceiling. One day when Neuger was at the exhibit, the ceiling read "Fuck Bush." The crowd was roaring. He called Eliasson, in Berlin, and held his cell phone up in the air. Eliasson thought he was at a rock concert.

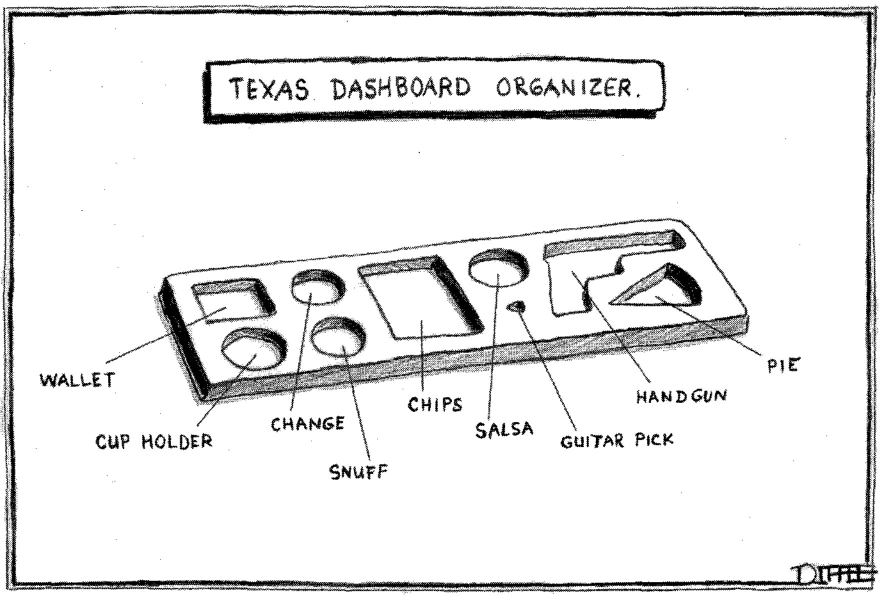
When Eliasson isn't travelling or working in Berlin, where he keeps an apartment, he lives with his family in a late-nineteenth-century house built by the Danish architect Andreas Clemmensen, in Hellerup, a neighborhood north of central Copenhagen, by the sea. Marianne Krogh Jensen, whom Eliasson met when she curated the Danish Pavilion for the 1997 São Paulo Biennial, and married three years ago, when they decided to adopt Zakarias, feels strongly about the demarcation between Eliasson's public and private lives. A friend of the couple's told me, "I think Marianne began to feel that it was too much all Olafur, all the time."

The house is a large white stucco structure. It's self-contained: there are few windows on the street side. But inside it is spare and bright—when Eliasson is home, he likes to keep all the lights on and all the doors between rooms open. This month, MOMA will publish "Your House," a limited-edition, hand-bound book in which the interiors of the house have been digitally reproduced and cut through (it's like the reverse of a pop-up book), so that the reader "walks" up the stairways and through the rooms. It will sell for thirty-five hundred dollars. Eliasson protects the privacy of his home—few of his friends in Berlin or New York have been invited to Copenhagen—but for MOMA he turned it into a proto-exhibition piece.

On a Saturday in May, I met Eliasson in Copenhagen for a late dinner at an Indian restaurant. He had just arrived from Washington, where he'd met with representatives from the Hirshhorn Museum, which houses the national collection of modern and contemporary art. In 2005, Ned Rifkin, then the Hirshhorn's director, invited Eliasson to consider the problem of the museum's profile. Both the museum, a round structure built on the Washington Mall, and its sunken sculpture garden across the street were designed by Gordon Bunshaft. Described by the *Times* as "a fortress," the Hirshhorn opened in 1974. Historically, part of the problem has been that there is no visual link between the museum and the garden. Rifkin told me, "After seeing 'The Weather Project,' I thought, The Hirshhorn is about art and artists, but what is the ecology of this institution?" He invited Eliasson to the museum. "We walked in the sculpture garden, and after talking to him I began to think how Olafur thinks—what is the notion, for instance, behind a sculpture garden?—and I saw that I was looking at literally turning the museum around."

As part of the preparation for "The Weather Project," Eliasson sent a list of twenty-one questions to the Tate's employees, among them "To what extent are you aware of the weather outside your workplace?" and "Has a weather event ever changed the course of your life dramatically?" At the Hirshhorn, too, he is attempting to address the way the institution views itself and how that affects a visitor's experience of the museum. Olga Viso, the current director, says, "We're trying to take the museum to the next level. How can we do that without an artist at the table? Olafur is an agent provocateur. He's made everyone—the support staff, the curators, the board—rethink their relationship to the museum."

Eliasson's ideas include reorienting the entrance, digging out space under the sculpture garden to rehouse the administrative offices, and constructing an



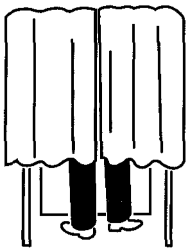
exterior ramp that would encircle the round façade and would be lit at night, creating a spiral of light that would heighten the museum's visibility on the Mall. Viso notes, however, that any rethinking of the Hirshhorn could take years to realize.

Until recently, Eliasson said yes to most of the projects he was offered. Now he accepts just one per cent. "But the 'no' list is so depressing," he says. His preoccupation with the consequences of engagement extends to almost every situation in which he finds himself. That night, he was tired. He said, "I think that the single fact that you are here will change the way I work. I think you will put a representational layer on everything I do." He paused, then said, "The studio is the center. Sometimes I'm so happy to get out of it! It has a hectic quality. It's too easy to develop a heliocentric identity. For a while, we thought about putting the studio on a boat. We'd have a cook. We'd have places to sleep. And we could just float off."

Over the summer, Eliasson did keep a promise that he had made to himself: he closed the studio in July, and spent most of the time at home. We spoke on and off: he was painting a bookshelf with Zakarias; he was working on the SFMOMA show. He and Sebastian Behmann were thinking about stage sets for a new production of "Phaedra," by Hans Werner Henze, at the Berlin State Opera; he was considering a project involving New York City's waterways. The Berlin Academy of the Arts had offered him a full professorship. He was worried about the Bard project—perhaps it wasn't good enough. He sent an e-mail to Bonakdar, asking, "What's next?" She told me, "It's an interesting moment. He's unsure."

He was also wrestling with the pressures of being a public figure. He had agreed to attend an international conference on global warming in Reykjavík, with the President of Iceland, in October. In early September, on his way to Berlin from Copenhagen, he called me from the airport. A reporter from a German newspaper had asked him to respond to the fifth anniversary of September 11th. Eliasson said, on the phone, "I told him, 'Who am I, as a private person, to have anything at all to say about that!' I am increasingly afraid of the day when I have to be in front of my work, rather than behind it. What I do, I think, is more important than who I am."

But if he always stressed the personal experience of the viewer, how could it be that his own experiences didn't matter? I asked. After a moment, he said, "I went once alone to Maine. I have never been as bored as I was for those two weeks. If I'm alone in the studio on Sunday, I end up playing with my bow and arrow. The only way for me to exist is to have these very close relationships, with those who are close to me, and in the gallery. I make things, but I need somebody else to see it with me. I look at an object on the table, and I have no empathy with it. I think, I am in a way senseless, but then you come into the room and the object starts to glow. I need you to know the world is there, which is why I am so obsessed with the structure of the world. It is why I have so many people working with me."



Then he said, "Can you stay on the line?" Eliasson placed his cell phone on the conveyor belt at the airport security check. When he picked it up again, he asked, "What was it like in there? I've always wanted to know."

In late September, the meadow beside the road into Bard College was knee-high in goldenrod. Eliasson, who was wearing a bright-green sweater, Louis Vuitton jeans, and heavy shoes, got out of a car that Tom Eccles, the executive director of the college's Center for Curatorial Studies, had driven to the top of a rise. The grass was wet. Sebastian Behmann, who had come with Eliasson from Berlin, carried a set of architectural drawings in a large white box. Eccles said, "Even five years ago, everyone wanted to work with Olafur. He had, and has now, the hallmark of a Noguchi." He looked at Eliasson expectantly; this was the third site Eliasson had considered for the installation, now called "The Parliament of Reality." A donor had been found, and preliminary approval granted.

For a long moment, Eliasson gazed east across the declivity of the meadow, to where the new Bard performance center, designed by Frank Gehry, glittered through the trees. Then he said, "It's lovely." He turned and pointed north to an area striped with tire tracks, where a construction trailer was parked, and asked, "What about the mobile home?"

Eccles laughed. "It's going, it's going."

Eliasson walked into the goldenrod. He looked at the site. "I like the scale of this. There is no shade, and the trees will always be illuminated. Here we have an excellent sun. The trees surrounding the island can't be pink, or it will look Japanese."

Behmann opened the white box, and showed Eccles the plans. Eliasson said, "Of course, they have changed completely!" The drawing showed a circle of trees around a pool; in the center of the pool was a round island. In the middle of the island was an elevated platform that could be used for performances or to hold a fire pit. Seating was provided by two rows of large, irregular boulders around the island's circumference. Eliasson had drawn a fifty-foot, steel-fretwork tubular bridge that would cross the water to the island, and, even in the drawing, the openwork pattern of the steel was beautiful, a series of unfolding diamonds.

Eliasson said, "In Iceland, the parliament is called *Altingen*, or 'all things.' It is a place where everything can be discussed and negotiated. This has to have that kind of hospitality. If I didn't feel that responsibility, I would make it more monumental. The bridge is to divide being on the island and not being on the island. It's about mediating the journey." He laughed, and then said, "I'm so happy about this bridge, I'm trying to make a philosophical statement to justify it!"

Eccles and Behmann began taking measurements of the site. Beside me, Eliasson sang softly, "How high is the water? How deep are the trees?" He glanced over at some picnic tables by the Gehry building and said, "In warm weather, people could bring their sandwiches here." Then he grinned, breaking into a two-step. "In winter, they could ice-skate." ♦

FICTION

GREENSLEEVES

BY HELEN SIMPSON

"Gardening!" the girl said, and tilted back in her chair the way she knew would get a reaction. "It's like knitting, isn't it."

"Stop that, Lara," her mother said. "You'll break the chair."

"A sign of middle age," Lara continued. "Old age. It's what old people do when there's nothing left in their lives."

"I thought you were supposed to be learning about Henry VIII," said her mother, Susan, glaring at her over a recently acquired pair of Ready Readers.

"Look at him, snipping away," Lara said, and pointed to her father up the garden with his secateurs. "You're just control freaks, you two. You should let it run wild!"

"Right," Susan grunted, returning to her list.

"You could have a meadow out there," Lara said. "Go green. A jungle!"

"It might just as well be," Susan said. "Great fat lumps of squirrels crashing round the trees like monkeys. Come on, Lara, what about some revision."

"Don't tell me what to do!" Lara shrieked.

"Perish the thought," Susan said. "But if you're going to take over the kitchen table like this when you've got a perfectly good desk in your bedroom—"

"Listen to me," Lara hissed. "What I'm putting myself through here, revising for exams, is entirely voluntary. It's not necessary; it's my choice. All the clever people are setting up Internet businesses, they're not wasting their time on this; they wouldn't dream of doing this. They're going to be millionaires in five years' time. And I'll be in debt, twenty thousand, thirty thousand—"

Her mobile ringtone cut in, a jaunty jerky samba, and instantly she was transported from cold-eyed fury to smiles and coos of delight. "Really . . . really . . . No, she's so not like that. . . . Oh, that's so funny. . . ." One artless peal of laughter after another loosed itself into the air.

Susan stared out the window into the green and white of May. I'm the family whipping boy, she thought. How moody it was, the weather, hormonal, melodramatic, lurching from thunder to glaring sun and back again in the space of an hour. She had been out there earlier, before breakfast, the whispering air blowing through the hairs on her skin. This sudden lush frondescence was springing up at the rate of an inch a day at least; you could stop and watch it grow like an erection. Efficient speedy impersonal sex: just what she hadn't wanted at Lara's age. She must stop seeing him. On the other hand, she didn't want to. The office was another world. It was nothing to do with them.

JESSICA HINES, "UNTITLED #9" (2006)

"That was Ruby," Lara said, as she finished her call.

"How is Ruby these days? Now she's split up with—Sean, was it?"

"Oh, she hasn't split up with him. She doesn't trust him, but that doesn't mean she's split up with him. No, she's made him give her the password to his Hotmail so she can check it anytime she likes."

"Wow," Susan said.

"Careful, Dad!" Lara said, as Barry came in from the garden and sat down beside her. "Mind my notes."

He doesn't know my password, Susan reminded herself, glancing at her husband.

"I've caught one of the little buggers," Barry said, patting Lara's arm in triumph. "I've trapped it under a dustbin lid and I've put bricks on top."

"What little buggers?" Lara said.

"A squirrel."

At least they were united in their detestation of squirrels, thought Susan. Earlier this year they had stamped across the grass and wrung their hands together over the scores of nibbled white camellia buds that had been scattered over the lawn like popcorn. Barry had started to talk longingly about rat traps. "Clean, quick, humane," he had mused. "A metal jaw comes down on the neck and all but decapitates them." He had an explosive temper, just as Lara did. The two of them were tinderbox touchy, gigantically flinty. She was sick of acting as the lightning rod for all their casual rage.

"Of all the things in the world to get upset about, you choose squirrels," Lara said. "What about climate change? Why don't you get upset about that instead? My children will fry, thanks to your selfish air travel."

"I should cut its head off and stick it on a spike," Barry said, ruffling his daughter's hair. "Like Henry VIII did with traitors."

He doesn't know, Susan thought. He doesn't know.

"That's so cruel!" said Lara, looking up at her father from under her eyelashes. "You're not really going to kill it, are you?"

"I don't know what to do," he said, shrugging. "Nothing else seems to stop them."

"The law says you have to drive any squirrel you catch far out into woodland," Susan said.

"And kill it there?" Lara said. "Like Snow White?"

"No," Susan said. "Then you set it free."

"Well, I'm buggered if I'm going to spend my Saturday taking a squirrel on its holidays," Barry said. "By the way, Susan, I thought you were going to organize some more potting compost. We've almost run out."

Susan looked at the two of them, side by side at the table. Barry was fair but with a high Saxon color and narrow hot-blue eyes, which gave him an intermittently dangerous look. Lara was fair, too, but fairer than her father by far, with white-blond hair and such fine white skin that her features showed in her face like fruit, a mouth that brought cherries to mind, or, when she yawned, strawberries. Not for the first time, Susan marvelled at how her own supposedly dominant genes—brown eyes, dark hair, and the rest of it—hadn't stood a chance against his. Her side of the family, a pack of devious troublemaking short-arses, as Barry had described them one Boxing Day on the long drive home from Cornwall, still muttered seventeen years on about the unlikelihood of her marriage to this outspoken Mancunian, with his tendency to put on weight and throw it around.

"Henry VIII was a bully," Susan said. "He had piggy little eyes and a nasty temper. It's all coming back to me."

"Absolute power corrupts—" started Barry loftily.

"Absolutely," Lara cut in.

"The thing about tyrants is, they're vain and they like to show off," Susan said. "Didn't he have a wrestling match with Francis I? And they're short. Hit-

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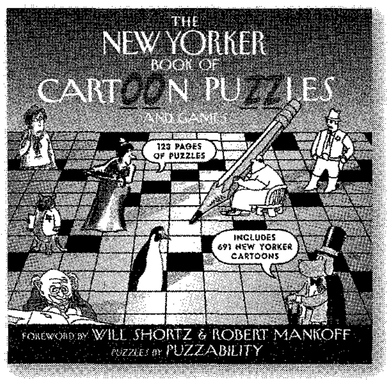
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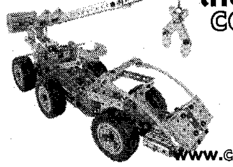

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ler. Napoleon. Stalin wore platform shoes."

"Henry VIII wasn't short," Barry said. "He was a fine figure of a man."

He puffed out his chest and placed the backs of his hands against his bulky waist, so that his arms were akimbo.

"You are, like, so irritating," Lara snapped. "All the people your age, the old people, they think history's like it was in their day. But it's much harder now."

"Divorced, beheaded, died," Barry chanted. "Divorced, beheaded, survived. He divorced the old one from Spain, didn't he, and the ugly one, the Flanders mare? And he cut the heads off the ones who betrayed him."

Even if he has sensed something might be going on, Susan thought, he won't want to know.

"It's not like that anymore," Lara said, furious. "That wifey stuff's for kids. It's all lithurgy and transubstantiation now."

"Liturgy."

"Whatever."

"Anne Boleyn kept him waiting seven years," Susan said. "He wrote 'Greensleeves' for her. Then she had a baby girl, not a son and heir, so he said, 'Off with her head.' But he still loved her a bit, which is why he paid for the finest swordsman in France to come over and do the job."

"It wasn't because she had a girl," Barry said, with a sideways look. "It was because she was an adulteress."

Susan faltered for a second.

"Lollards," she said.

"What about them?" Barry said.

We've not used mobiles at all, she thought, her mind scampering around wildly. We've only ever used e-mail, and he doesn't know my password. My computer's at the office, he has no access to my e-mails, and, even if he were to pick up my BlackBerry, he doesn't know how to use it.

"Weren't they something to do with transubstantiation?" she said.

"No," he said.

He fixed her with his beady blue eyes. "He's bluffing," she told herself.

"In 1538, John Lambert was burnt at the stake," Lara chanted, holding her hand in the air to silence them. "Because he held that the body of Christ wasn't substantially present during the Eucharist. Transubstantiation."

"Catholics still believe that," Barry said. "That the bread turns into Christ's body. Literally."

"But they're not allowed to believe in condoms," Lara said.

"What?" Barry said, and suddenly he was blushing like a maiden. "Lara, would you make me a cup of tea, please, while I try to decide what to do with the prisoner."

"Prisoner?" said Susan.

"The squirrel," he reminded her.

Me, Susan thought.

"What did your last slave die of," Lara said, getting up from her notes. As she filled the kettle, she started to sing.

"Alas, my love, you do me wrong, to cast me off discourteously. . . ."

It seemed to Susan that Barry was staring at her.

"When I have loved you so long, delighting in your company," sang Lara. "That's your only song, Mum. You used to sing it to me to get me to sleep. Every night, 'Greensleeves.'"

"Yes," Susan said.

This was rubbing it in. If she was going to feel guilty, this would make her feel it, hearing her seventeen-year-old daughter carolling her password. Stupid choice, really: too obvious. Perhaps Barry had been tapping in all along. But she didn't feel guilty at all. It was none of his business. She just didn't want to get caught.

"I could nail it to the trellis," Barry said meditatively. "Once I've killed it, of course."

"Why would you do that?" Susan asked. "Nail it to the trellis?"

"As a warning to the other little buggers," Barry said.

"It doesn't work," Susan said. "Capital punishment as a deterrent. They've proved it. It doesn't put anybody off."

"Hung, drawn, and quartered," said Lara, back at the table. "What does that mean?"

"Isn't that when they tie your legs and arms to four horses?" Barry said, taking a sip. "Then send them off in different directions?"

"Ugh!" Lara said, transfixed.

"No," Susan said. "That was another thing they did."

"Hanging was for commoners," Barry said. "Beheading was for the aristocracy. They still have beheadings in Saudi."

"Really," Susan said.

"When they hold the head up afterward, there are a few seconds when it, you know, the head, can actually see the crowd," Barry said. "There's enough oxygen left in the brain for it to carry on for another ten seconds."

"Right," Susan said. "Come on, Lara, back to the grindstone. You've done hardly any work this morning."

"You are so annoying!" Lara cried. "Why can't you just leave me *alone*? Why do you always have to spoil everything?"

"You won't pass if you don't get down to it. I could test you, if you'd like."

"Bug off!" Lara yelled. "You think you can say anything you like to me; you don't leave me any privacy."

Privacy, thought Susan, I'll have some of that. Privacy. Whatever you like to call it.

"Look, Lara, we'll leave you alone in here if you're really going to do some work," Barry said. "Won't we, Susan. Come on, I want you to come and help me decide what to do with the culprit."

"Oh," Susan said. "All right."

The kitchen door opened onto a small square paved area planted with pots of daisies and sage and rosemary. Against the side wall was a small self-assembly cold frame where they were hardening off adolescent geranium cuttings for planting out toward the end of the month. Nearby stood a bush of peonies with big pink faces, amorous and Elizabethan in their high-colored finery. Barry took her hand and held it to his mouth, kissed her fingertips, then took them in his mouth and tightened his teeth on them until she said, "Ouch," and pulled away.

"It's behind the shed, is it?" she said.

"Weighed down by bricks."

"Have you decided what to do?"

"Well, I was hoping you'd come up with an idea."

"Ah," she said carefully. There was a pause. Susan examined the toe of her shoe. "That depends on whether you want to kill it," she continued. "And, if you do, you'll upset Lara. I ought to warn you now, she'll call you cruel and murderer and all the names under the sun."

"What are your favorite flowers?" he asked. "I'd like to grow them for you."

"You should know," she said. "You should know what my favorite flowers are by now."

"I know I should, but I don't."

They walked hand in hand to the garden shed, and there behind it was a galvanized-steel dustbin lid under a dozen or so bricks.

"Well?" he said.

"Roses," she replied. "But not just any old roses."

"No, of course not," he snorted.

Well, don't think I'm going to tell you after that, she thought, but it's those small soft damask roses I like best, with their strong sweet scent and crumpled faces in old-fashioned shades of crimson. But that'll have to stay my secret now, too, won't it.

"The moment of truth," Barry said, holding down the fluted dustbin lid by its handle while he nudged the piled bricks off with his foot.

He lifted one side of the lid a couple of inches. There was no sign of movement. He lifted it another couple of inches and bent down to peer underneath. Then, like a waiter removing the domed silver cloche from a plate of roast beef, he whipped the lid into the air with a flourish. His mouth dropped open.

"It's gone!" he said. "It's gone!"

"So," Susan said, breathing again, deep into her stomach.

"No, really, Susan, I caught it. It was there. It was very small, it was a young one, but it was there. It must have scrabbled its way out somehow."

"A figment of your imagination," insisted Susan with heartless increasing confidence.

"How could I imagine a squirrel?"

"Lara's right," she said. "You're obsessed."

"You don't believe me, do you?" he said helplessly.

She lifted his hand and dropped a kiss on it. Then she turned and wandered back down the garden, singing under her breath. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Bedford (Ohio) Times-Register.

A 34-year-old Libby Road woman reported someone broke into her apartment and stole numerous items. Police said a screen on her kitchen window had been pushed in to gain access into the apartment. Taken from the apartment were three gold rings, a gold and ruby ring, one gold anniversary band, two video cameras, a suede jacket, a pearl necklace, $825 cash and a boa constrictor.

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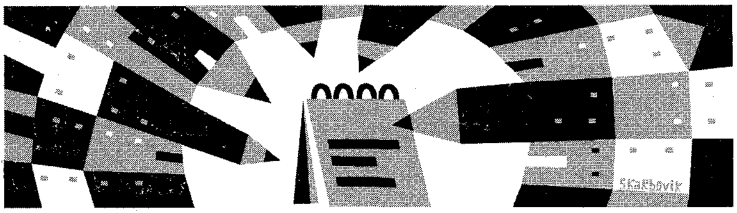


BOOKS

PROUD FLESH

The cult of cosmetic surgery.

BY REBECCA MEAD

In 1597, Gaspare Tagliacozzi, a professor of surgery at the University of Bologna, published "De Curtorum Chirurgia per Insitionem," an illustrated guide that documented for the first time a technique for performing a rhinoplasty, or nose job. And what a nose job it was. In one of a series of woodcuts, Tagliacozzi depicts a noseless Renaissance gentleman, his ruff untied and his jerkin unlaced, sitting with left arm outstretched, a meaty flap hanging from his biceps; in the next, an elaborate harness straps his arm up and back, so that his face is buried in his upper arm and his hand is extended over his head, as if he were sniffing his armpit and scratching his occipital bone at the same time. The harness would stay on for twenty days, until old arm tissue became new nose tissue—or tissue that might at a distance pass for a nose, which was the best that Tagliacozzi's patients could expect, the likelier prospect being infection, excruciating pain, and death.

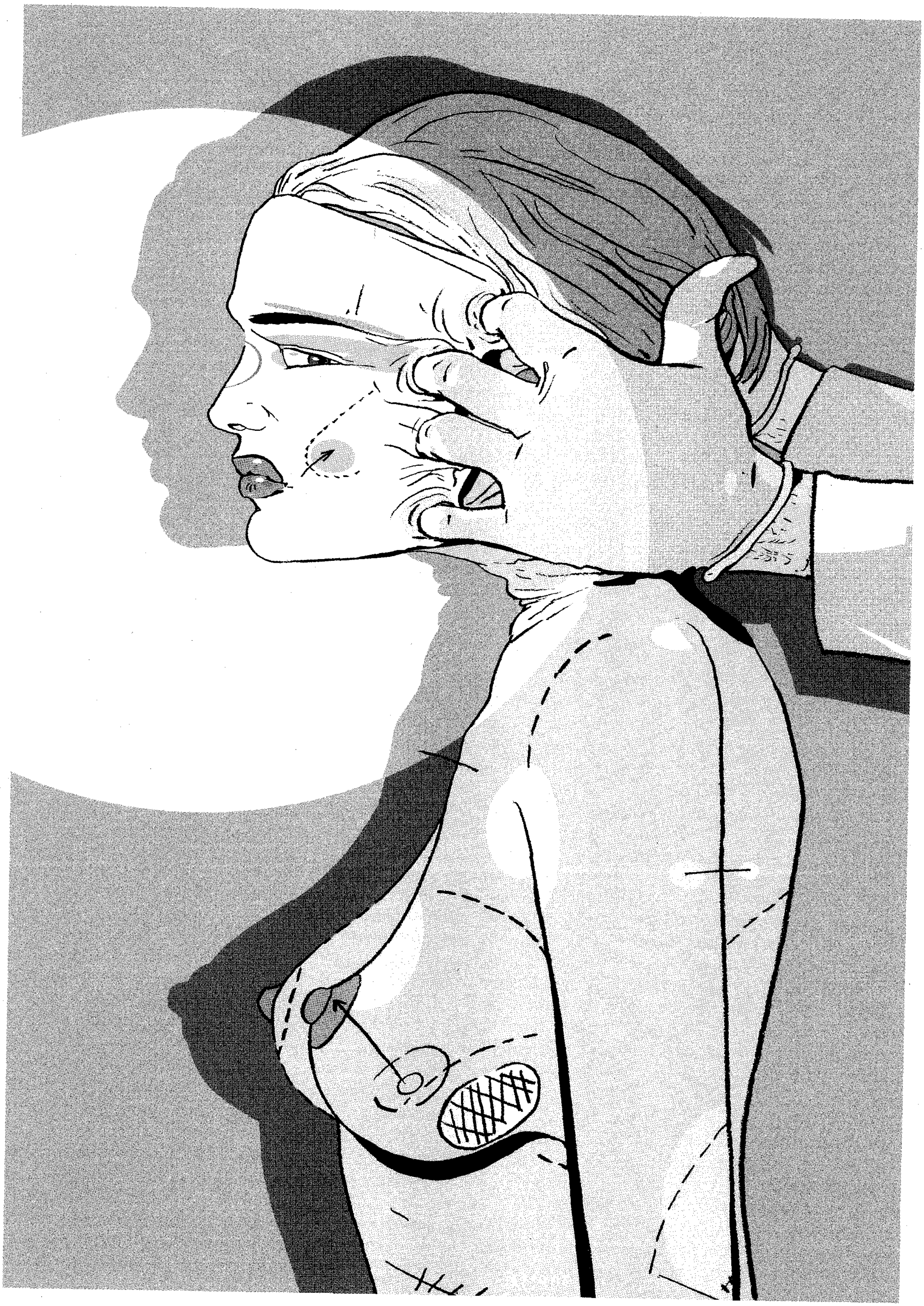
Tagliacozzi's woodcuts are reproduced in "Aesthetic Surgery," a lavishly illustrated volume about plastic surgery, edited by Angelika Taschen, that was published in 2005. (The book may be too lavishly illustrated for some tastes: along with a number of fascinating diagrams from medical textbooks of the past four centuries—the before-and-after shots of their time—there are many gruesome photographs of contemporary surgeries in progress, including one of a brow-lift, in which a hairy forehead has been cut away from the skull and folded down over the anesthetized patient's eyes. It looks like something dreamed up by Buñuel.) Tagliacozzi also makes an appearance in "Beauty Junkies: Inside Our $15 Billion Obsession with Cosmetic Surgery" (Doubleday; $24.95), the hybrid memoir-exposé by Alex Kuczynski, which credits him with being the first surgeon to realize that improving a person's looks might improve his or her life. The job of the plastic surgeon, Tagliacozzi writes, was "to restore, repair, and make whole those parts of the face which nature has given but which fortune has taken away, not so much that they might delight the eye but that they may buoy up the spirits and help the mind of the afflicted."

Restoration and repair do not much characterize the surgery with which Kuczynski is most concerned: she makes a distinction between plastic surgery, a term that may refer to the repair of a cleft lip or a face disfigured by an accident, and cosmetic surgery, which refers to an elective procedure that is medically unnecessary. Kuczynski's interest lies in this more recent development. If Tagliacozzi's purpose was to restore a semblance of normality to a face ravaged by disease or by swordplay (one of his patients had lost his nose in a duel), so that its bearer might go through the world somewhat less stigmatized, what is the purpose and meaning of cosmetic surgery today?

In her attempt to answer this question, Kuczynski, who writes the Critical Shopper column for the *Times*, takes a tour through the industry, visiting medical conferences, interviewing plastic surgeons, having lunch with patients, and undergoing her own adventures in the doctor's office. Over the course of a decade, starting at the age of twenty-eight, she received Botox and collagen injections, microdermabrasion, liposuction, an upper eye-lift, and a shot of a mucuslike substance called Restylane, which left her blubbering into a mug of vodka while sitting on her bathroom floor, her upper lip accidentally inflated to "the size of a large yam." (Caveat lector: A decade or so ago, for about a minute, Kuczynski and I moved in the same circles, and she once gave me a recommendation for a dermatologist, whom I visited for a single consultation. The doctor—possibly the same one who later gave Kuczynski the yam lip—was ten years my senior, and had clear, translucent skin that glistened pinkly, like prosciutto that had been sliced to an inviting, tissue-paper thinness, and she said that if I, too, started undergoing facial peels I could have the complexion of a woman half my age by the time I hit forty.)

Kuczynski argues that the soaring incidence of cosmetic surgery—a nearly fivefold increase in the number of cosmetic procedures performed on Americans during the past decade—has been driven by market forces rather than by the measurable health needs of the nation. Surgeons exhausted by the medical-insurance morass are flocking to the field. "If you're a doctor working in this kind of environment, do you want to spend an hour removing a freckle and get paid $12 in two months by some insurance company? Or do you want to spend fifteen minutes putting Botox into someone's face and get $1,000 in cash five minutes later?" one attendee at a convention of plastic surgeons asks. Meanwhile, the hiring of public-relations professionals has become common practice. In a chapter entitled "Harvey Weinstein's White, White Teeth," Kuczynski deftly documents the successive P.R. efforts made by an unsavory-sounding New York

"Beauty Junkies" is an anomalous literary phenomenon: a muckraking book that comes out, on balance, in favor of muck.

ISTVAN BANYAI

dentist, Larry Rosenthal, who was promoting something called the "smile lift"—a set of oversized porcelain veneers that built out the teeth and hence, it was claimed, eliminated lines around the mouth—and who also once had his license suspended, reportedly for the misuse of prescription forms to obtain sleeping and diet pills. (Smile-lift indeed.)

Kuczynski has an eye for the telling detail—liposuction needles called the Mercedes, the Tiger Tip, and the PickleFork, each with "a name that sounds as if it belongs to some sort of vibrator or sex toy"—and an ear for the marketplace's euphemisms: "Scars aren't healed, they are *managed.* Pain isn't stopped, halted, alleviated; it, too, is *managed.*" But "Beauty Junkies" is an anomalous literary phenomenon: a muckraking book that comes out, on balance, in favor of muck. "If you had to nail me down on the subject of whether cosmetic surgery is a good thing, I would have to defend it," Kuczynski writes, and offers a handy tip sheet for would-be consumers ("Distrust doctors who are too tan, or who have bad hair implants"). At the same time, she concludes with a declaration that by the time of the book's publication she will have been Botox- and collagen-injection-free for a year. This makes for a nice narrative arc—the lesson of the yam lip internalized—although in press interviews she has said, when asked about the possibility of undergoing further cosmetic enhancement, "Never say never."

"Never say never" captures the prevailing cultural mood when it comes to cosmetic surgery: celebrity refuseniks, such as Diane Keaton, are the oddballs, and the popularity of television shows like "Extreme Makeover" and "Nip/Tuck" point to a widespread fantasy that beauty is a commodity to be acquired by the many rather than a cosmic gift mysteriously granted to the elect, even if many viewers might flinch from going under the knife themselves. There are demonstrable advantages that accrue to the beautiful: very attractive people earn, on average, ten to fifteen per cent more than do their homely colleagues, according to a study that appeared in the *American Economic Review*, and that alone might be taken as an argument for a chin implant.

But discussions about cosmetic surgery are rarely limited to such practical considerations; they invariably involve questions of morality. Certainly, moral questions loomed over the work of Gaspare Tagliacozzi: in the two centuries after his death, his techniques for repairing noses languished under pressure from the Catholic Church, which held that those whose noses had collapsed from the effects of syphilis did not deserve to have the mark of their sin surgically erased. Kuczynski's chosen metaphor for the culture of cosmetic surgery—and her own engagement with it—is that of addiction; but at one point she refers to the "cult" of the beauty junkie, and the allusion is a telling one. After her liposuction, Kuczynski writes, she was "overwhelmed by a deep sense of shame. I couldn't believe how much I had willingly hurt myself." But when she then underwent an eye-lift, she writes, "I realized what a miracle had taken place. It felt like I had cheated on something but wouldn't ever get in trouble."

This is the language of religious experience, with its wretchedness and its sublimity and its consciousness of transgression, and Kuczynski's devotees of cosmetic surgery observe their beauty regimens—the twice-weekly hair appointments, the weekly scorched-earth depilations, the bimonthly teeth whitening, the thrice-yearly cosmetic-surgery consultations, and the annual surgical procedures—with the self-scourging rigor of a medieval ascetic. "On the Upper East Side of New York City, the body and the face are considered to be something like a garden. . . . They are to be tended and cleaned, cared for every day in the hope that the buds will remain dewy," Kuczynski writes, employing the same metaphor used by St. Teresa of Ávila, the sixteenth-century mystic and monastic reformer, whose autobiography called upon the beginner in prayer to think of himself "as of one setting out to make a garden in which the Lord is to take His delight." The women Kuczynski interviews for whom cosmetic surgery is both a passion and a pastime are beauty nuns, dedicated to the discipline of personal physical reformation.

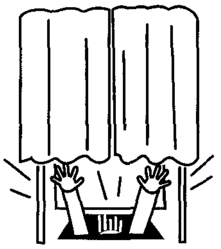
Unlike St. Teresa, of course, Kuczynski's beauty nuns are interested in the garden of themselves for its own glory, not for the glory of God. "We have begun to think of our bodies as something like an accessory that can be modified when necessary, discarded when it is worn out, and upgraded when required, a leathery sack to transport us from one medical specialist to the next," Kuczynski writes; and the analogy is apt, if not entirely coherent. (Pending improvements in cryogenic technology, a person's body cannot be "discarded when it is worn out" without obviating the need for further visits to medical specialists.) The leathery sack that Kuczynski has in mind may be from Hermès, but the idea that the body is a mere vessel that will deteriorate in time is ancient and enduring. The new idea offered by the contemporary culture of cosmetic surgery is that it is the vessel itself that we must value, rather than the soul or spirit that it contains.

Like certain strains of Christian mysticism, cosmetic surgery is founded on a notion of human perfectibility, although the means of achieving perfection, and the rewards thereof, are the opposite of those in a Christian theology. If for St. Teresa perfection required transcending the allures of the material and the sensual, adherents of the cult of plastic surgery undergo surgical mortification of the flesh in order to embrace the sensual life more fully. Ultimately, Kuczynski argues, what the beauty junkie is pursuing, and what our culture values most, is not simply aesthetic improvement but the preservation of apparent youthfulness at any cost. One of her interviewees is a Bel Air matron who—having already had liposuction, a tummy tuck, a brow-lift, two face-lifts, two eye-lifts, and two successive sets of breast implants—has recently undergone labiaplasty, an operation to rejuvenate the vagina. A culture that insists on the appearance of nubile availability among women old enough to be grandmothers may be as tyrannical as one that requires the syphilitic to wander noseless forever, reviled by all. Kuczynski's book vividly documents such a culture; it also conforms in every measure to that culture's catechism. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Restless, *by William Boyd (Bloomsbury; $24.95).* Boyd's ninth novel, an absorbing historical thriller, is loosely based on the history of a covert branch of British intelligence created to coax America into the Second World War. The story unfolds on parallel tracks as Sally Gilmartin, born Eva Delectorskaya, a Russian émigrée recruited into the British Secret Service in 1939, reveals her clandestine past in an autobiography that she gives to her daughter, Ruth, a graduate student and single mother living a dull civilian life in Oxford in 1976. These installments give the narrative momentum (the accounts of Ruth's daily life drag, by contrast) as Eva describes the taciturn spy who recruited and trained her before becoming her lover; her secret propaganda work in New York; and the act of duplicity, almost deadly, that forced her to flee to England and live under an assumed identity. Ruth barely has time to process the shock of her mother's secret before she is swept into a dangerous game: finding her mother's betrayer before it's too late.

Ancestor Stones, *by Aminatta Forna (Atlantic Monthly; $24).* Forna's first book was an unflinching account of her childhood in Sierra Leone and her investigation into the death of her dissident father. Here, in her début novel, the setting is an unnamed African country that passes, in a single generation, from village life—"an order in which everybody had their place"—to colonialism and civil war. The story is told in the voices of four women, daughters of different wives of the same father. More archetypes than characters, they come to life only in flashes of color: one is schooled by nuns, her baptism paid for by the "Pagan-Baby Project"; another grows fascinated with the colonials' skin, which "tore like old cotton." Forna's strength is in invoking the menace in daily life under a corrupt regime. On election day, people are so frightened by soldiers that no one walks the streets except the lunatics, "dazed and smiling, unexpected lords of the city."



The Man Time Forgot, *by Isaiah Wilner (HarperCollins; $26.95).* When Briton Hadden died, in 1929, at the age of thirty-one, he had earned a million dollars, invented the radio quiz show, coined the terms "socialite" and "pundit," and seismically changed American journalism by conceiving of the weekly news magazine *Time.* He also left behind extensive notes about magazines that became *Life* and *Sports Illustrated.* While Henry Luce is the name most closely associated with the *Time* empire, this illuminating biography reveals that Hadden was the "presiding genius" at the fledgling publication. Friends and rivals first at Hotchkiss and then at Yale, Hadden and Luce were close and competitive, though Hadden always came out ahead during his lifetime. Wilner makes a convincing case that, after Hadden's death, Luce assiduously downplayed his colleague's essential role in founding and shaping one of the most successful magazines in history.

Putnam Camp, *by George Prochnik (Other Press; $29.95).* In 1909, the same summer Freud delivered the Clark University lectures, introducing psychoanalysis to the United States, he joined James Jackson Putnam, a Boston Brahmin physician, for a sojourn at his Adirondack retreat. Prochnik, who is Putnam's great-grandson, shows how Putnam championed Freud's methods to an élite and suspicious group of American physicians. At the same time, Putnam tried to convince Freud that therapy was incomplete without some metaphysical dimension, maintaining that patients might need "more than simply to learn to know themselves." Prochnik provides fascinating, if occasionally arbitrary, details of the historical and social context ("In a typical American meal circa 1909, starch was king"), but his narrative is strongest when it depicts Freud outside his element—trying to play his first game of tetherball, struggling amid campers who hike, sing, and play dress-up games at dinner.

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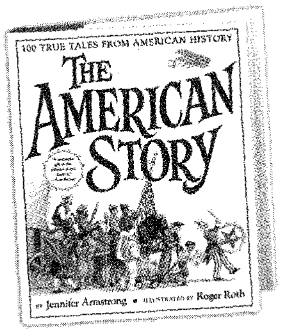
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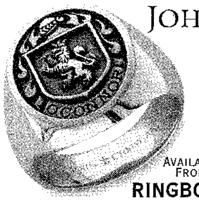

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BOOKS

VILLAGE SCRIBE

Leonard Woolf, Bloomsbury's older brother.

BY RACHEL COHEN

"Looking back at the age of eighty-eight over the fifty-seven years of my political work in England, knowing what I aimed at and the results, meditating on the history of Britain and the world since 1914, I see clearly that I achieved practically nothing," Leonard Woolf wrote in the last of the five volumes of his autobiography. "I must have in a long life ground through between 150,000 and 200,000 hours of perfectly useless work." He was respected for his articles and parliamentary briefs, but his books on political history, in particular the long-labored-over volumes of "After the Deluge," dropped into obscurity. His wife, in her diary, sometimes wondered whether he gave in too thoroughly to his sense of failure. "Oh but I have been made miserable—damped & disheartened—this is no exaggeration—because the Lit Sup. only gave half a column of belittlement to After the Deluge," Virginia Woolf recorded in October of 1931. "L. says—& honestly believes—that this puts an end to the book. . . . He says his ten years work are wasted, & that he sees no use in going on."

"After the Deluge" was meant to be a major work of "scientific history" that would have the stature of the books Leonard Woolf's friends had written. By 1931, Lytton Strachey had published "Eminent Victorians" and "Queen Victoria," John Maynard Keynes "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," Roger Fry "Vision and Design," Edward Morgan Forster "Howards End" and (with Leonard Woolf's years of careful encouragement) "A Passage to India," and Virginia Woolf, for whom her husband was bulwark and first reader, seven novels, including "To the Lighthouse" and, in 1931, "The Waves," which was reviewed that same "damped & disheartened" day. Her diary entry concludes, "And when I say this morning incautiously, 'I'm reviewed in the M[anchester] Guardian' L. says 'Is it a long review?' And I say, feeling like a mother to a hurt & miserable little boy, Yes. Lord what human beings are!"

Both Woolfs were in the perpetual business of writing, editing, publishing, and reviewing books. At the Hogarth Press, which for many years occupied the larder in their basement, they printed not only "After the Deluge" and "The Waves" but T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude"; they helped translate works of Gorky and Dostoyevsky, and became Sigmund Freud's publishers in England. Leonard Woolf was also the literary editor of *The Nation* and, for twenty-seven years, co-editor of *The Political Quarterly*, and he counted among his contributors H. G. Wells, Thomas Hardy, Isaiah Berlin, and Rebecca West. Never was a man more occluded by masterpieces. There is thus a mystery and a peculiar satisfaction surrounding the fact that Woolf, at nearly eighty, began to publish an autobiography that was immediately hailed by reviewers, won an important literary prize, and, in the almost half century since the first volume appeared, has seldom been out of print.

"Sufficient for the morning is the pleasure thereof," Woolf said in the last volume, "and one of the most unfailing pleasures is to sit down in the morning and write." Discovering the writing life of Leonard Woolf has always been a project for the assiduous; even the forthright autobiography takes refuge behind that shell of privacy which he referred to as his "carapace." In 1989, Frederic Spotts edited an admirable and substantial selection of Woolf's correspondence, and there has been a quickening of interest in recent years: Woolf's first novel, "The Village in the Jungle," was reissued in 2005; three long out-of-print stories have just been published by the Hesperus Press, under the title "A Tale Told by Moonlight"; and now Victoria Glendinning's "Leonard Woolf" (Free Press; $30), the first full-length biography, brings us a thoroughly researched and elucidating account. Through the ages of Woolf's life—the childhood among impoverished middle-class Jews (the family fortunes diminished when Woolf was eleven and his barrister father died); an adolescence reading classics at St. Paul's on scholarship; intellectual emergence at Cambridge; seven difficult and transformative years in Ceylon as a colonial administrator; and nearly six decades of editing, marriage, war, and labor politics—one sees the flickering aspirations of Leonard Woolf the writer, which, though often invisible to others, remained, to him, a central fact of his existence.

He was an austere man, with a strong temper and a thin face, whose clothes fit him loosely; reserved, even shy, in many social situations, he would also take his pipe from his mouth and become, unpredictably, declamatory; he was idealistic about the possibilities of human society, but often preferred the company of animals; his hands had an inherited tremor that sometimes embarrassed him; he had a quality of leading at the same time that he had a quality of holding himself aside. One of the girls in "The Waves" says, "We must form into pairs . . . and walk in order . . . with Louis going first to lead us, because Louis is alert and not a wool-gatherer." A big family is a kind of small village, and, although Leonard Woolf rebelled against the constraints of being the third of nine children in a loud, fatherless brood, he placed himself in communities of similar dimensions again and again.

"At the beginning of the day Mrs. Woolf had a bad head ack. Sad dis-appointment in the Woolfs den" ran the day's story for August 4, 1889, in *The Leonard Paper*, edited by the eight-year-old Woolf. Such details are part of the valuable documentation that Glendinning has unearthed from these early years, about which Woolf's own account is hurried and incomplete. She rightly emphasizes what Woolf was long reluctant to say: that his Jewishness alienated him once he began school and that, in the at best casually anti-Semitic world of the British intelligentsia, it affected all his relations. (Occasionally, she can be haphazard in what she attributes to Woolf's ancestry: in his preference for having his eggs and bacon cooked in separate pans, she finds “a residue, perhaps, of his Jewish upbringing.”) But some measure of alienation was, by Woolf’s own reckoning, simply the lot of the intellectual. “We were not merely obviously much too clever,” Woolf wrote of his college friends. “We were arrogant, supercilious, cynical, sarcastic, and Lytton always looked very queer and had a squeaky voice.”

Strachey—possessed, Woolf observed, of “that indefinable quality which tends to excite animosity or ridicule at sight in the ordinary man, the Cambridge ‘blood’ or tough”—was Woolf’s closest friend at college, and Woolf became a sort of eleventh sibling in the uproarious, “passionately intellectual” Strachey household. The two were members of Cambridge’s semi-secret society the Apostles, along with their friends Keynes and Forster and the philosopher, seven years Woolf’s senior, whose mind gave the whole society its cast: G. E. Moore. They felt themselves to be Greek and free. Even six decades later, Woolf compared Moore to Socrates, and at Cambridge he happily began to replace his private, protective creed, “Nothing matters,” with G. E. Moore’s characteristic question: “What exactly do you mean by . . . ?” Keynes described their gatherings this way: “Moore himself was a puritan and precisian, Strachey . . . a Voltairean, Woolf a rabbi, myself a nonconformist . . . Clive [Bell] a gay and amiable dog . . . Forster . . . the elusive colt of a dark horse.”

Virginia and Leonard Woolf in London, 1939.

ESTATE GISÈLE FREUND

The role of the rabbi seems to have combined a personal sense of history, a strong moral force, and the willingness to be a confidant. “All men confide in Leonard,” Virginia Woolf wrote in a letter in 1925, “especially such as love their own sex.” She first heard of Leonard from her adored older brother, Thoby Stephen, who was not an Apostle but was an important figure in their college set, called “the Goth” for his stature and presence. Like the Stracheys, the Stephens made an indelible impression on young Leonard Woolf. He was introduced to and terrified of the great man of letters Sir Leslie Stephen, who “in old age was much given to groaning audibly,” and he never forgot meeting the beautiful sisters Virginia and Vanessa, who were “just as formidable and alarming as their father.” He wrote, “Suddenly seeing them one stopped astonished and everything including one’s breathing for one second also stopped as it does when in a picture gallery you suddenly come face to face with a great Rembrandt or Velasquez.”

Their Cambridge set, with the addition of Roger Fry and a few spouses and relations, was Bloomsbury. Leonard Woolf was its only member whose family was not part of the very close-knit English intellectual class—just a few related families, prosperous and ever confident—of which he wrote, “I know that I am ambivalent to aristocratic societies, disliking and despising them and at the same time envying them their insolent urbanity.” In his ambivalence, he was perfect for the group; he could express its self-admiration and its self-criticism and could embody the new world arriving on its doorstep. His attachment was fierce (none of his friends, as Glendinning observes, wrote as much about the Apostles as he did), but at college the effect on his writing was not salutary: his letters ramble among private jokes, his poetry is sentimental, his competition paper did not win a prize. It wasn’t the way of his set to study particularly hard, but for Woolf mediocre exam results had the most serious consequences, since he alone would have to work for a living and support his family. After graduating, in 1903, he caught one last performance of the Beethoven C-Minor Symphony, which was the sort of music the Apostles classed as “supreme,” packed up ninety volumes of Voltaire (a way of bringing Strachey along), and, now a cadet in the Civil Service, sailed for Ceylon.

In the next seven years, Woolf learned Tamil and Sinhalese, oversaw the pearl-fishing season, supervised the salt harvest brought in on the backs of buffalo, and shot the buffalo when they contracted rinderpest. He was promoted to Assistant Government Agent at Hambantota, kept a pet leopard, and, listening to the stories of village life he heard as a judge, became, as he later wrote, “completely immersed, not only in my work, but in the life of the people.”

Though he deplored how little he was writing and reading in Ceylon, it was there that his prose gained its distinctive specificity of observation, and the tone of the experienced, thoughtful older brother that people found bracing and reassuring in his conversation. He kept a meticulous, unflattering official diary, which his higher-ups criticized, and which the Sri Lankan government published after independence as an accurate portrayal of colonial life. He also wrote Strachey intense, descriptive letters, which he quoted and refashioned in his later work. In a passage about the pearl fishery (from the second volume of his autobiography, "Growing"), which Glendinning says is "among the best sustained set-pieces he wrote," Woolf describes the death of an Arab fisherman, the grief of the man's brother, and the dignity of the sheikh in charge of the boat, who speaks in mourning:

> I didn't understand Arabic, but I could understand what he was saying. The dead man had lived, had worked, had died. He had died working, without suffering, as men should desire to die. . . . I heard continually the word Khallas—all is finished. I watched the figures outlined against the grey sky—the long lean outline of the corpse with the toes sticking up so straight and stark, the crouching huddled figure of the weeping man, and the tall upright sheik standing by his side. They were motionless, sombre, mysterious, part of the grey sea, of the grey sky.

THE FOG

The bright blue and the hard, plowed browns of
November. We passed a mound of plastic-covered silage
In the farmyard. To the south the silhouettes of the mountains
As if they were just forming out of dull matter,
Saturated with light at their frayed borders.
Watching out for swans wintering here,
Huge snowy peonies drifting with the current,
We drove along the river. The Orthodox church in Miedzybrodzie
Still shone with lime whiteness
Through black rails of branches. And suddenly
The milky, thickening nothing swallowed us,
With only the pupils of the anti-fog lights
Above the asphalt. To tell myself to myself
As if I were those whites, browns, blues, and blacks.
Savoring the sweetness and bitterness of sounds,
Accepting pain and love and death.
To tell not myself to not myself.
Or to dream myself. To be dreamed.
Without myself in myself.

—*Janusz Szuber*

(*Translated, from the Polish, by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough.*)

These figures stand in contrast to others less impressive, such as Jaffna's assistant superintendent of police, who used to drive Woolf around and give a running monologue: "I didn't ask for much, a little house in an English shire, with plenty of hunting and six or seven horses and enough money to run up to London for a week when the frost comes—Get out, you ugly stinking fucking son of a black buggered bitch; you black bugger you—I don't ask for much, I'd be as happy as a king—you greasy fat Jaffna harlot, get out of the light, you black swine—and I don't get it."

Woolf grew increasingly disgusted by his imperial position, and, when a leave of absence in England approached, he wasn't sure whether he would resign and write novels or return to permanent involvement with the inhabitants of the Sri Lankan jungle. But it was clear that his emotional life was still bound up with the Apostles. Thoby Stephen had died from typhoid in 1906, and since then the Cambridge friends and the two Stephen sisters had drawn instinctively together, as in "The Waves" the death of Percival binds the six other characters. Two days after Thoby's death, Vanessa Stephen, to Leonard Woolf's envy and disappointment, accepted Clive Bell's proposal of marriage. In 1909, Lytton Strachey proposed to Virginia Stephen. "As I did it, I saw that it would be death if she accepted me," he wrote to Woolf, and he promptly initiated a new campaign: "I think there's no doubt whatever that you ought to marry her." Woolf replied from Ceylon, "Life would probably be supreme," but, he added anxiously, "the ghastly complications too of virginity and marriage altogether appal me." Forster, at work on "Howards End" during these years, considered a transformed version of the situation: his attractive, parentless Schlegel sisters and their ailing brother Tibby impetuously take up poor but aspiring Leonard Bast after a performance of Beethoven's C-Minor Symphony. Forster was more worried about his fictional Leonard than the Stephens and Stracheys were about the real one. Vanessa Bell thought Woolf the very man for her sister. "If I were you," Strachey urged him, "I should telegraph."

In 1911, Leonard Woolf returned to London. Although the city had exchanged the cart horse for the automobile and the piano for the radio, he was able to pick up where he had left off, beginning again his long talks with "the Strache," and running over to dinner with the Bells. The group was at its most involuted: Strachey and Keynes were both sleeping with Duncan Grant, who had not yet started sleeping with Vanessa Bell, who had two children and was painting seriously and sleeping with Roger Fry. "I lived a life of pleasure, just unmitigated, pure, often acute pleasure, such as I had never had before and have never had again," Woolf wrote of those months. "In October I began writing 'The Village in the Jungle' and I realized that I was falling in love with Virginia." It wasn't a simple courtship, and the refraction in Virginia Woolf's "Night and Day" (1919) is suggestive. The book's two lovers have what they call "lapses": his come when she "looked more beautiful, or more strange . . . or said something unexpected," and his "sense of her romance welled up and overcame him." It was important to him that she be a remote ideal, and he would say vehemently that "he only loved her shadow and cared nothing for her reality." Her lapses "took the form of gradual detachment until she became completely absorbed in her own thoughts."

In "Beginning Again," the third volume of his memoirs, Woolf wrote, "Virginia is the only person whom I have known intimately who had the quality which one had to call genius." When she was talking, "she might suddenly 'leave the ground' and give some fantastic, entrancing, amusing, dreamlike, almost lyrical description of an event, a place, or a person." She was "a very beautiful woman" and yet, he wrote, it often happened that "the crowd in the street . . . would go into fits of laughter at the sight of Virginia." G. E. Moore, Morgan Forster, and his wife had a quality that he associated with certain characters in Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky: that of the inspired "silly," who has the purity and absurdity of the holy fool. "He likes 'Sillies,'" Virginia wrote in her diary. "He likes the dependent simplicity of Morgan & myself. He likes settling our minds, & our immense relief at this." After his proposal, she was ill for a while and could not see him, but six months later, certain of her love (but not yet certain of how to spell his name), she announced to a friend, "I've got a confession to make. I'm going to marry Leonard Wolf. He's a penniless Jew. I'm more happy than anyone ever said was possible."

They were married in August of 1912, and the following year he published "The Village in the Jungle," an engrossing and stark portrait of a tiny Sinhalese compound, and of how a family and the village are destroyed. Glendinning situates the book among other British accounts of the East, like Orwell's "Burmese Days" and Forster's "A Passage to India," but the central story is probably closer to home. It concerns a father, Silindu, his two unusually beautiful daughters, and his attempts to ward off encroaching and lustful suitors. Silindu, a hunter and village eccentric, teaches his two daughters the ways of the jungle. One, the more domestic, marries early; the other, wilder, is forced into marriage but refuses to live with her scarred and lecherous husband and is tormented by the villagers until she dies.

"The Village in the Jungle," with its double allegiance to Ceylon and the Stephens, is more tense and successful than Woolf's second novel, "The Wise Virgins" (1914), generally read as a roman à clef (the beautiful sisters are in this case Camilla and Katherine, and the frustrated lover is Harry), in which human society—corrupt, conventional, and punitive—is opposed to a wilder, truer life of art and intellect that Harry, again, fails to attain. Camilla and Harry are both meant to be painters, and one day, when he is supposedly painting her, she begins to talk to him, imagining the lives of people they know. She pauses, rousing "a curious excitement of mind rather than of body in him," and he says, "Go on, go on. God! I wish I could paint."

If you were a competitive person who wanted to write novels, there can have been few greater challenges than being married to Virginia Woolf, whose first novel, "The Voyage Out," was published a year later, in 1915. Woolf's family and Bloomsbury were to varying degrees irritated and offended by his second novel, and he could see from what Strachey and Forster wrote to him and to his wife that his own fiction was comparatively lacking. "I shall never write another book after these damned Virgins," he wrote to Strachey, though he may just have been growing more interested in a different kind of book. In her "Night and Day," Ralph, the character who helps us to imagine Leonard, wants to find a little cottage and write "the history of the English village from Saxon days to the present time." Leonard Woolf loved rural England, and his married life always included a more or less ramshackle house in the country, where he would become so horticultural that, Glendinning tells us, "he had to make an agreement with Virginia to take regular afternoon walks with her, twice a week on set days, otherwise he would never have left the garden." He wrote that once, when she was listening to Hitler on the radio, she called to him to come inside: "I shouted back: 'I shan't come. I'm planting iris and they will be flowering long after he is dead.' "

These country retreats were established as respite from the overstimulations of London literary life after Virginia Woolf had two severe breakdowns, one in 1913, during which she attempted suicide, and another in 1915. "Leonard's diary," Glendinning writes of the former episode, "is a catalogue of bad nights and better nights, of numbingly painful scenes, of Virginia physically attacking the nurses, of excruciating 'difficulty,' of her agitation and unpredictability." Woolf himself describes beautifully and perceptively his wife's illness and the role of caretaker that he occupied on and off throughout their marriage; some believe

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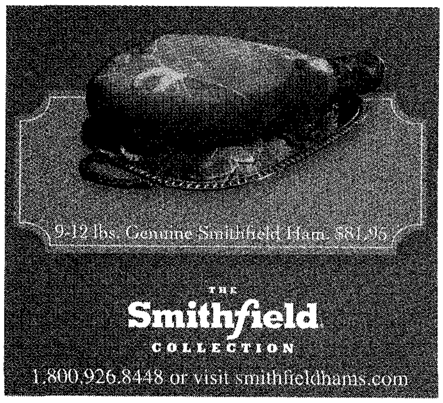
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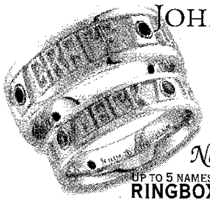
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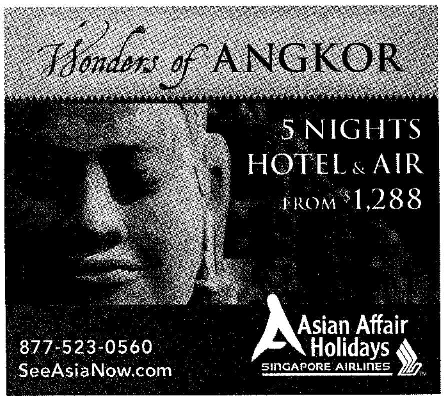
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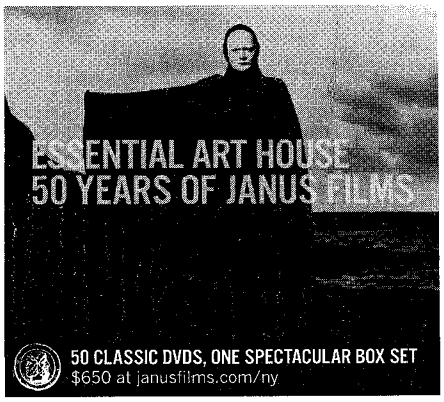
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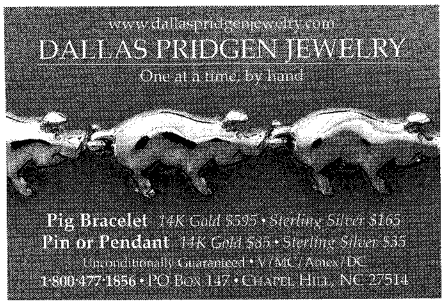
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that her novels would not have been written without him. By and large, his somewhat compulsive tendency to regulate and keep track—he noted his mileage every day, recorded how much they spent on every item of clothing, made long lists of gardening seeds to purchase, entered into Sebastopolian campaigns of protest letters—was steadying for Virginia Woolf, though sometimes it has a quality both touching and absurd. When she had an affair of some four years with Vita Sackville-West (who is the subject of a previous biography of Glendinning's), he expressed no overt jealousy, but on one occasion wrote his wife's lover an admonishing note: "It has been proved over & over again in the last 10 years that even 2 late nights running are definitely dangerous for her & this time it was 7 or 8."

This horizonless attention to Virginia Woolf's stability was also part of the motivation for starting the Hogarth Press—they both thought it would be good for her to have something pleasant and manual and bookish to do when she couldn't be writing—and, although much of the time-consuming work fell to Leonard, publishing was one of his greatest satisfactions and the years when the Hogarth Press was flourishing were some of their happiest. "Nineteen years," she wrote in her diary, "how moving to find this warmth, curiousity, attachment in being alone with L." These were the years when their familiar set gathered in the evenings for what they called the Memoir Club, for which he wrote many of what later became the best sections of his autobiography, and where he was, nevertheless, outshone by his wife and Maynard Keynes. These were also years of steady work and accomplishment, though he still joked to Strachey about his inadequacies: "Having failed as (a) a civil servant, (b) a novelist, (c) an editor, (d) a publicist, I have now sunk to the last rung . . . journalism."

There was much that Woolf liked in the political work he began in 1913, embarking on those two hundred thousand hours of going to committee meetings, giving speeches, and working with feminists, labor activists, anti-imperialists, and pacifists. In the war, his brother Cecil was killed in the trenches by a shell that also injured his brother Philip, and, as was true for many, politics gained new urgency. His first political project was to undertake a research effort for Beatrice and Sidney Webb (the Fabians who later founded the London School of Economics) which became the influential book "International Government" (1916), read attentively by those responsible for the League of Nations. It was followed by "Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism" (1920).

The merits of these practical books were more immediately evident to his compatriots than were those of his three volumes of political history, which took ten, eight, and fourteen years to complete, respectively, and in which, as Glendinning says, he felt obliged to start "so far back in time that by the time he reached the present, and the policies which he passionately wished to promote, reader-fatigue had set in." This was in part due to a struggle with Apostolic expectations; his friends were constantly telling their rabbi how he ought to write. He self-consciously tried to apply the lessons of G. E. Moore's "Principia Ethica" to history; he bore in mind that Lytton Strachey liked best the style of "Empire and Commerce in Africa" ("Those final pages on Uganda really remind one of Swift and Voltaire"); Maynard Keynes told him that the first two volumes of "After the Deluge" should have been called "Principia Politica," so he used the title for the third volume. Glendinning herself can't resist lecturing Leonard Woolf, asserting that had he pursued his idea of "a revised version of the Wandering Jew . . . it might have been his masterpiece." In "The Waves," Virginia Woolf expressed the group's collective understanding: "Louis, now so opulent, goes to his attic window among the blistered roofs and gazes where she has vanished, but must sit down in his office among the typewriters and the telephone and work it all out for our instruction, for our regeneration, and the reform of an unborn world."

By 1931, they were both more than a little worried about the unborn world; the fourth volume of Woolf's autobiography, "Downhill All the Way," chronicles the decline of many hopes. In it he tells a darkly comic story of accidentally driving into a German military parade in 1935 and having the crowds give a *Heil* salute to the marmoset on his shoulder. Several of their friends kept poison to swallow if the Germans should succeed in invading England; bombers flew over their house in Rodmell. In early 1941, when Virginia Woolf was finishing "Between the Acts," she became, once again, seriously unwell, and, in March, she killed herself. "It is no good trying to delude oneself that one can escape the consequences of a great catastrophe," Woolf wrote. "Virginia's suicide and the horrible days which followed between her disappearance and the inquest had the effect of a blow both upon the head and the heart." Some of his friends, he said, thought he should leave Rodmell for a time, but he "had nowhere to stay in London."

At the end of 1942, Trekkie Parsons—a painter and an amateur botanist, cheerful, practical, and known as a delightful hostess—began visiting him at Monks House, Rodmell. She was married to Ian Parsons, the editor and publisher of Chatto & Windus, which eventually became a sort of partner and home for the Hogarth Press, and she divided her weeks between the two men for the next three decades. Children did not laugh at her in the street. She had neither "flights" nor "lapses," but he did not need her to. For Woolf, the living and the dead were continuously present in Rodmell. He was clerk to the Parish Council, and a large donor to the Village Hall; children knew that they would be scolded for stealing his apples but counted on Mr. Woolf to bring trays of fruit to the school every fall. One summer, he won all seven first prizes for vegetables at the Horticultural Show. Trekkie Parsons slept in Virginia Woolf's bedroom and worked in her studio; he wrote new love letters using the old phrases, while he edited for publication an important source for his own recollections, Virginia Woolf's diaries.

What Leonard Woolf really liked, he had said in an essay in 1927, was "diaries and letters and memoirs," in which "one gets the most vivid and important vision of a pageant of history." His own history books come alive when they are anecdotal and digressive and at their least systematic—when "they pulled Lord North out of his barouche," or when, in "Principia Politica" (1953), he describes his own typically bourgeois household of the eighteen-nineties. Friends and reviewers said of that book's long discussion of Hitler, Stalin, and authoritarianism that what they liked best was the passage about his methods of training animals. After nearly thirty years of trying to enforce reason on the chaos of history, Woolf threw it over, and began to write his autobiography. "I write this looking out of a window upon a garden in Sussex," he said on one of the first pages. "I feel that my roots are here and in the Greece of Herodotus."

Victoria Glendinning says gently that in this part of his writing life Woolf was "released," and her book describes his later years with clear-sighted sympathy. Release was inseparable from loss: Lytton Strachey had died in 1932, Roger Fry in 1934, Virginia Woolf in 1941, Maynard Keynes in 1946, and G. E. Moore in 1958. Two years later, left in his garden with his ideal now at the distance of memory, Woolf published the first volume of his autobiography. Rodmell offered the continuity of the Saxon village and of all his villages—Cambridge, Hambantota, Bloomsbury—and it was there that he wrote his best books.

When we read the autobiography now, the village parade is a gorgeous panoply: Strachey "in a tangle of his own arms and legs," and Virginia Woolf playing bowls in the garden, the indefatigable Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the jungle, the fishermen, the labors of the Hogarth Press, the different desolations of the two wars, here the struggle, there the failure, here again the unusual triumph. "What a life he has led," exulted Morgan Forster, who himself lived past ninety, "and how he has led it!" When he was still at work on "After the Deluge," Leonard Woolf suggested that "even a failure might bring some small ray of light or grain of knowledge," but it was on the last page of the last volume of his memoirs that he could say with sincerity, "There are other assets of old age. The storms and stresses of life, the ambitions and competitions, are over. The futile and unnecessary and false responsibilities have fallen from one's shoulders and one's conscience." It took eighty-eight years, but Leonard Woolf was at last a writer who had done what he could for history. ♦

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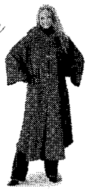

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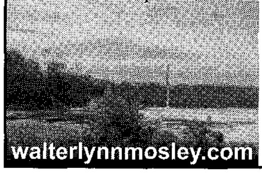
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MUSICAL EVENTS

FASCINATING RHYTHM

Celebrating Steve Reich.

BY ALEX ROSS

The other day, I watched as Steve Reich walked away from Carnegie Hall, where celebrations of his seventieth birthday were under way, and out into his native city. Trim and brisk, he darted into West Fifty-seventh Street, fell back before oncoming traffic, bopped impatiently in place, then darted forth again. He soon disappeared into the mass of people, his signature black cap floating above the crowd. Perhaps I should have lamented the fact that one of the greatest living composers was moving around New York unnoticed, but lamentation is not a Reichian state of mind, and I thought instead about how his work has blended into the cultural landscape, its repeating patterns and chiming timbres detectable all over modern music. Brian Eno, David Bowie, David Byrne, and a thousand d.j.s have paid him heed. On Fifty-seventh Street, Reich-inflected sounds may have been coursing through the headphones of a few oblivious passersby.

Three decades ago, New York's leading institutions would have nothing to do with Reich. A riot broke out when Michael Tilson Thomas presented "Four Organs" at Carnegie in 1973: one woman tried to stop the concert by banging on the edge of the stage with her shoe. Now uptown is lionizing the longtime renegade. His birthday fell on October 3rd, and, in the ensuing weeks, Carnegie joined ranks with three other organizations to present a citywide festival. BAM began, with a program of Reich dances, choreographed by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker and Akram Khan. Then the Whitney hosted a four-hour marathon, ranging from the eruptive "It's Gonna Rain" (1965) to the medievally pure "Proverb" (1995). Carnegie took up the baton with a four-day weekend of concerts, including Reich's most recent composition, "Daniel Variations," written in memory of the slain journalist Daniel Pearl. Lincoln Center finished, with "You Are (Variations)," "Tehillim," and "The Cave."

The central event was a grand concert at Carnegie. Pat Metheny played "Electric Counterpoint," the Kronos Quartet played "Different Trains," and Steve Reich and Musicians played "Music for 18 Musicians." The last is often pronounced Reich's masterpiece, and on this occasion, swathed in Carnegie's reverberant acoustics, it unfolded like a dreamscape, its piano and percussion pulses dissolving in a blur, its attenuated melodies shimmering in a haze of resonances, its rich chords suspended for long moments. At one point, the composer walked away from his piano and stood for a moment in a corner, watching his thirty-year-old wonder unfold. As the scattered rock stars in the audience might have attested, you can't get any cooler than that.

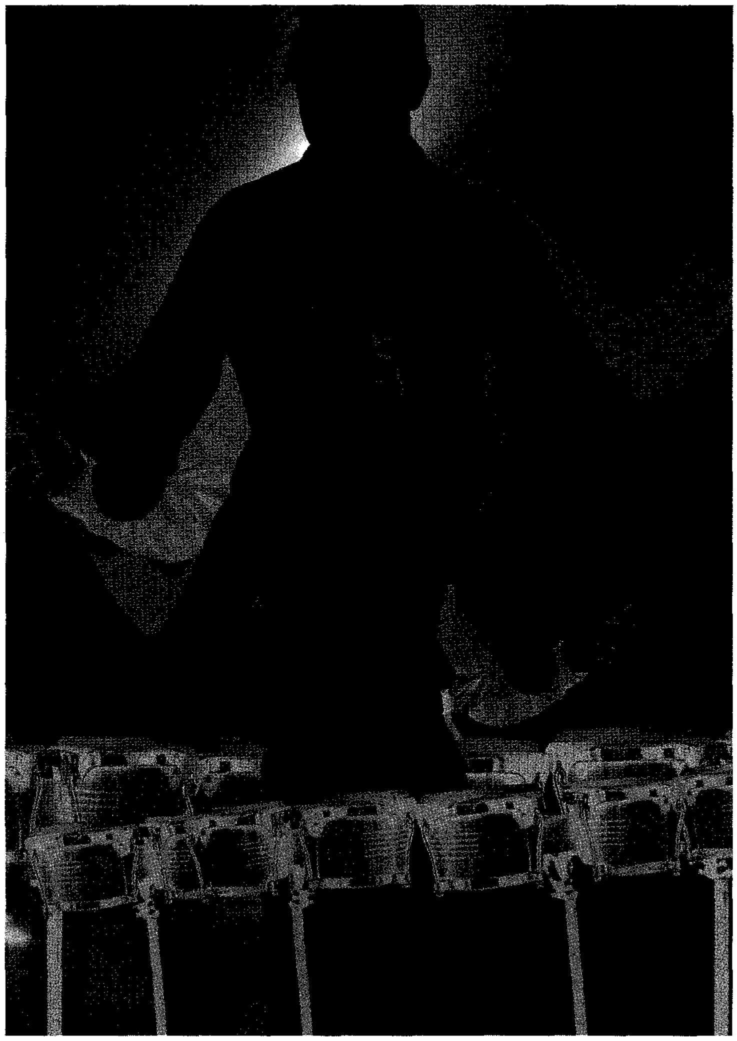
Reich's eureka moment occurred in the mid-nineteen-sixties, when he was living in San Francisco. He had taped a street preacher named Brother Walter shouting "It's gonna rain!" during a sermon on Noah and the Flood, and he looped those words on two tape recorders. When he pushed play on both machines, he found that one was running slightly faster than the other, so that the loops went out of sync. The machines began writing contrapuntal patterns in the air, an electronic canon for two raging voices.

The eighteen-minute tape composition that Reich extracted from this accident is ominously compelling in itself, but his masterstroke was to apply the going-out-of-phase trick to instrumental music, in "Piano Phase" (1967), for two pianos. I heard that simple, stunning piece three times last month: at BAM, in its original version; at the Whitney, in a version for two marimbas; and at Carnegie, in a version created by the percussionist David Cossin, who plays it on digital sound pads. (A video of Cossin playing the other part was superimposed, giving him a Vishnu-like, four-armed appearance.) The opening section uses only the notes E, F-sharp, B, C-sharp, and D, which, when run together in rapid patterns, suggest the key of B minor. Halfway in, the note A is added to the series, tilting the harmony toward A major. This small change never fails to have a brightening, energizing impact. Pieces like this can leave you happy for hours, like drugs without the mess.

"Piano Phase," along with Terry Riley's "In C" and Philip Glass's "Music in Similar Motion," marked a turning point. After a spell of avant-garde complexity, these young American composers were rediscovering the elements of music—a steady beat, tonal chords. Yet their work was absolutely modern, without nostalgia, without a trace of "neo" or "post." In subsequent years, Reich kept pressing forward: in "Drumming," he applied what he called "music as a gradual process" on a symphonic scale; in "Tehillim," he blended his modern language with ancient Hebrew cantillation; and in "Different Trains" and the video operas "The Cave" and "Three Tales" he competed with hip-hop innovators in combining recorded samples with live music. To hear the majority of Reich's work in a few weeks was to be amazed by the Stravinsky-like precision of his solutions to a wide array of musical problems. One issue he has never fully resolved, though, is how to present amplified music in traditional halls. The superb Los Angeles Master Chorale, in particular, was hampered by muddy sound in Alice Tully Hall.

In the most recent pieces—"You Are (Variations)," Variations for Vibes, Pianos, and Strings, "Daniel Variations"—Reich has consolidated four decades of invention. Neon-lit textures have given way to dense, dusky landscapes, with tender lyrical passages at the heart of each piece. It's as if Reich were finally letting himself look back in time, perhaps even indulging a secret Romantic urge. Yet, in the tribute to Daniel Pearl, there is also a new influx of coiled power: fleets of pianos and percussion tap out telegraphic patterns, warning of the next big crash.

Reich changed music, and he also changed how music relates to society. In the face of early incomprehension, he took a do-it-yourself approach to getting his work before the public. Nonclassical musicians were among his models: he saw John Coltrane some fifty times, and marvelled at how the great man would unleash mind-bending sounds, pack up his sax, and disappear into the night. With his namesake ensemble, Reich performed in galleries, clubs, and wherever else he felt welcome. The effects of this paradigm shift can be seen on any day of the week in New York, as composer-led ensembles proliferate. Bang on a Can is the longtime leader, and the NOW Ensemble is a deft young group gaining attention. The American Composers Orchestra, undergoing a happy revitalization, is highlighting composer-performers all season: a recent show at Zankel Hall mixed vividly colored ensemble pieces by Michael Gatonska, Brad Lubman, and Michael Gandolfi with solo appearances by the painterly percussionist Susie Ibarra and the sharp-witted songwriter Corey Dargel. Post-Reich, composers are evolving into a more mobile, adaptable species.



Reich's repeating patterns and chiming timbres infuse modern music.

JOHN RITTER

The Reich ensemble retains most of its original members, and they remain an awesome force, even as shaggy hairdos have given way to dignified shocks of white. At Zankel Hall, they played Part I of "Drumming," a phase-shifting tour de force in which bongos are struck with sticks. I was curious to see how they would compare with two sharp young ensembles who had performed the same stretch of music in recent weeks—So Percussion, at Symphony Space, and four Juilliard percussionists, at Carnegie. The youngsters drummed with effortless grace, as if the score were written into their genetic code. But the veterans more than held their own, bringing to bear a kind of disciplined wildness, in the spirit of the Ghanaian drummers with whom Reich studied before he wrote the piece. The energy that blazed up at climactic moments could have powered the hall in a blackout.

Reich has the reputation of being a "cool customer," to take a phrase from Joan Didion. But there is heat below the surface. Like so many major artists, he has a profoundly equivocal nature; he immerses himself in strict procedures, and yet he takes on subjects that are almost unbearably charged. At various times, he has addressed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, American racism, the Holocaust, the encroachment of technology, and, now, Islamic terrorism. He has empathy for outsider voices: it seems no accident that his seminal work, "It's Gonna Rain," took off from the ranting of an African-American preacher, who, at the time, probably caused passersby to wince and walk faster. In his high-tech pieces, voices may be cut up, looped back, and layered upon themselves, but their raw emotions stay intact. The composer does not tell us what to feel. Instead of pointing a finger, he raises a hand.

In this sense, "Different Trains," for recorded voices and string quartet, may be Reich's most staggering achievement, even if "Music for 18" gives the purest pleasure. He wrote the piece in 1988, after recalling cross-country train trips that he had taken as a child. "As a Jew, if I had been in Europe during this period, I would have had to ride very different trains," he has said. Recordings of his nanny reminiscing about their journeys and of an elderly man named Lawrence Davis recalling his career as a Pullman porter are juxtaposed with the testimonies of three Holocaust survivors. These voices give a picture of the dividedness of twentieth-century experience, of the irreconcilability of American idyll and European horror—and something in Mr. Davis's weary voice also reminds us that America was never an idyll for all. The hidden melodies of the spoken material generate string writing that is rich in fragmentary modal tunes and gently pulsing rhythms.

At Carnegie, Kronos played "Different Trains" with unusual force. Hank Dutt, the violist, added touches of throaty vibrato, as if to indicate the Old World culture that Hitler destroyed. The final minutes were, as ever, harrowingly beautiful, with the words of a death-camp survivor woven into unearthly luminous music: "They loved to listen to the singing, the Germans. . . . They said, 'More, more,' and they applauded." There was a long silence before the ovation for Reich began. ◆

THE THEATRE

HOUSE CALLS

Domestic servants and domestic pests.

BY HILTON ALS

Clayburgh and Brown in "The Clean House." Photograph by Brigitte Lacombe.

Of the many insights that the late Jane Bowles contributed to American letters, perhaps the most lasting are her observations of female domestic life as it is lived in far-off corners of the world. In short stories such as "A Guatemalan Idyll" and "Everything Is Nice," set in Morocco, Bowles—a wildly imaginative woman from New York—captured the ways in which the everyday and the domestic dictate the actions and shape the morality of a culture. By concentrating on elements of society that her fellow world travellers ignored—the travel writing of Waugh, Orwell, and Naipaul was usually restricted to politics, which is to say, to the recording of male voices—Bowles established a niche that remains underexplored. Most American writers who do venture overseas, rather than opening themselves to the unknown with curiosity and respect, drag otherness home, using it to incite dramatic heat—or farce. Unfortunately, that is just what the MacArthur-winning playwright Sarah Ruhl has done in her dramatic comedy "The Clean House" (at Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse under the direction of Bill Rauch). Although the play's central character, a maid named Matilde (Vanessa Aspillaga), is from Brazil, there is little here to differentiate her from, say, the Mexican maid in Paul Mazursky's film "Down and Out in Beverly Hills" or the Mexican maid in James L. Brooks's "Spanglish," both of whom, with their comically broken English and foreign ways, wreak havoc in the households of the privileged.

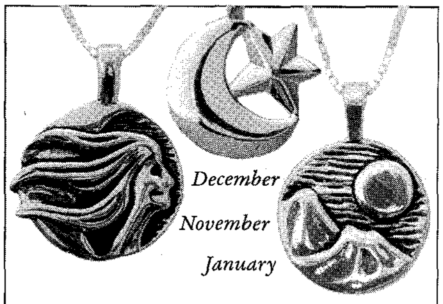
Matilde's nationality certainly matters little to her overachieving employer, Lane (Blair Brown). A busy, childless doctor, married to a surgeon, Charles (John Dossett), Lane has a slim frame and neatly trimmed red hair that bristles with discontent. "It has been such a hard month," she confesses to the audience near the start of the play. "My cleaning lady—from Brazil—decided that she was depressed one day and stopped cleaning my house. I was like, clean my house! . . . We took her to the hospital and I had her medicated and she *still wouldn't clean.*" Beat. "I'm sorry, but I did not go to medical school to clean my own house."

That house, where much of the play takes place, is as white, closed off, and antiseptic as Lane's sister, Virginia (Jill Clayburgh, who seems uneasy in her underwritten role). Virginia is a compulsive cleaner. "If you do not clean, how do you know if you've made any progress in life?" she asks. Her cleaning, Ruhl makes clear, is an act of sublimation. "If there were nothing to tidy up," Virginia adds, "then there would be so much leisure time and so much thinking time and I would have to do something besides thinking and that thing might be to slit my wrists. Ha ha ha ha ha ha, just kidding." Virginia's sense of humor is as lame as her attempts to mask her sibling envy. She not only resents Lane's success; she is mystified by her sister's sense of entitlement. How did Lane come to believe that she deserved it all? Ruhl suggests that Lane's ambition is also a form of sublimation: she maintains order in her professional life because she can't do so at home.

One afternoon, in Lane's living room, Virginia meets Matilde, who has aspirations to become a comedian; she wants to tell the perfect joke, which she defines, cutely, as being "somewhere between an angel and a fart." (Like Virginia's and Lane's, Matilde's most revelatory lines are addressed directly to the audience.) One thing leads to another, and Virginia, naturally, volunteers to clean the house for the less domestically inclined Matilde, who has better things to think about. Matilde is the stereotypical image of the dreamy Latina: lusty, heavy-bosomed, with more than a hint of pluck. In one scene, Virginia compliments her on her coffee. Matilde says, "We make good coffee in Brazil." Virginia: "Oh—that's right. You do!" Matilde: "Does that help you to place me in my cultural context?" Ruhl may poke fun at the trope of the Latina as invisible housecleaner, but she doesn't actually try to go any deeper with her own character. Matilde feels less like a person than like a refugee from a film by Luis Buñuel. Like Buñuel's various chambermaids and feckless women held hostage by an overdeveloped sense of duty, she cleans Lane's emotional house by bearing witness to the folly around her. Dividing her duties between Charles, who ends up living with his dying lover, Ana (the elegant Concetta Tomei), and Lane, who learns compassion when she takes Ana in after Charles goes off on a tree-hunting expedition, Matilde remains no more and no less than the sum of her parts. By giving her the most self-consciously lyrical and philosophical lines of dialogue—"The perfect joke makes you forget about your life. The perfect joke makes you remember about your life"—Ruhl ends up performing her own version of literary typecasting. Latins *are* more poetic than whites, no? Always ready with a pithy phrase to organize the messy rooms of their Caucasian employers' souls? At least that's what we take away from Ruhl's lazy romanticism about the proletariat, for whom she seems to have no real feeling at all.

Over the past forty-five years, Ellen Stewart, the founder and artistic director of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, in the East Village, has helped launch the careers of a long list of writers, directors, and performers—among them Sam Shepard, Tom O'Horgan, Andrei Serban, and Candy Darling—who, were it not for her visionary sense of what theatre can be, might never have found a home. It is a pleasure, then, to add a new company—Witness Relocation—to Stewart's roll call of magnificent acts. The company, under the supervision of the director and choreographer Dan Safer, consists of about a dozen actor-dancers, who also contribute to the creation of each piece. Witness Relocation's current show, "Dancing vs. The Rat Experiment," is an hour-long work bursting with ideas, both visual and aural. As the curtain goes up, we see the performers lying on their sides, reading magazines, their faces lightly dusted with powder, like the bored inhabitants of a beach somewhere in Hell. Suddenly, we hear a young woman singing "Unchained Melody." Her solo is followed by a stentorian voice describing the mating habits of women and men. Or so we think. Gradually, it becomes clear that what we're hearing is really a description of the mating habits of male and female rats. The question raised: Are we so different from vermin? A woman confronts the male lover for whom her husband has left her. A fight ensues. The kicking and wrestling, and the contorted postures the dancers assume, drives the point even closer to home: we are never more like vermin than when our social order is disrupted.

While Witness Relocation's influences are clear—the genre-mixing works of Pina Bausch, Richard Foreman, and the Wooster Group are definitely in evidence—there is plenty of originality here, too, as well as youth, joy, vulgarity, and an ironic distance from the media-saturated world that inspired the show. Still, the piece would have worked even better if Stewart had put it on a smaller stage. One's senses are supposed to be overwhelmed by the marriage of music, movement, and madness hurtling across the metaphorical footlights. On the large stage of the La MaMa Annex, all of this is more diffuse than it should be. When I attended the show, there were more people onstage than there were in the audience. But not to worry—no one knew who Sam Shepard was when he started out, either. ♦



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THE CURRENT CINEMA

PRETTIER PICTURES

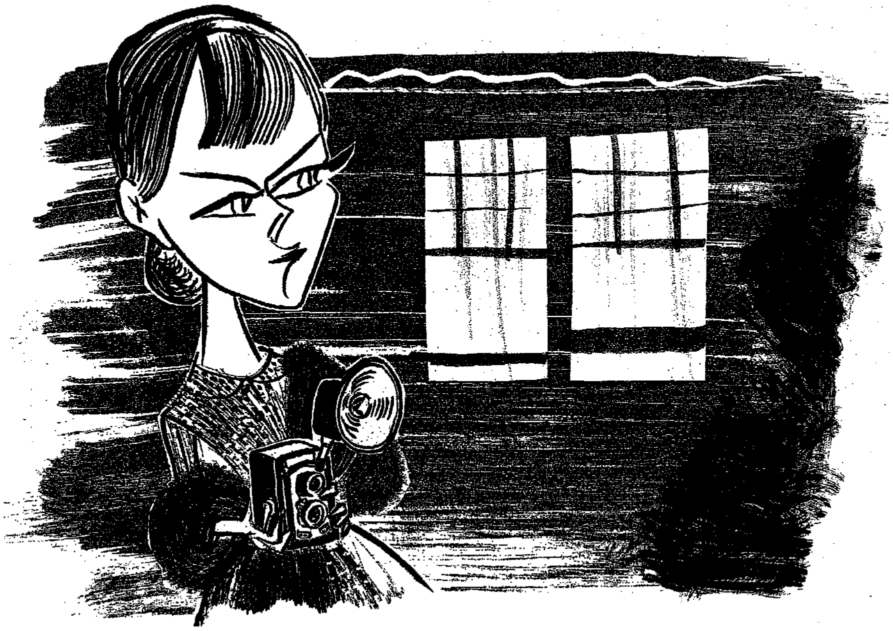
"Fur" and "A Good Year."

BY DAVID DENBY

Nicole Kidman, who assumes the role of Diane Arbus in "Fur," is unique among modern movie stars in her willingness to take on tough parts and put herself in the hands of little-known or art-house directors. And it's not hard to see why filmmakers as varied as Jane Campion ("The Portrait of a Lady"), Jonathan Glazer ("Birth"), and Lars von Trier ("Dogville") have wanted to play Pygmalion to her Galatea. She's responsive, eager, and gentle; her tactile flesh takes the light better than anyone else's; her confiding smile can turn demanding and perverse, and yet she still seems fresh, as if she'd taken up acting last month. But, while other actresses have successfully searched for mentors—Marlene Dietrich found her way to Josef von Sternberg, Bette Davis landed in William Wyler's productions at Warners, and Diane Keaton teamed up with Woody Allen—Kidman hasn't always been lucky in her choices, and her taste in scripts is often as shaky as it is brave. As Arbus, she recreates the waiflike and recessive quality that many noticed in the photographer, but the screenplay, by Erin Cressida Wilson, doesn't allow her to do much else. Although the subtitle of the movie is "An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus," Wilson and the director, Steven Shainberg, draw on Arbus's family and on many elements from her life and her art, only to turn the material into feeble nonsense.

The movie is set in the Manhattan of 1958, when Arbus is a properly coiffed, highly competent but anxious mother of two daughters—a dutiful woman who assists her husband, Allan Arbus, in shooting fashion spreads for magazines and for Russeks, the chain of luxury department stores started by her family. She chafes at her circumscribed role and has moments when her consciousness lapses into dreaminess and erotic fantasy—all of which feels true enough of the actual woman. But then the picture falls apart. Arbus becomes fascinated by a spectral figure who lives in her building—a man who always wears a mask. Slowly, like a teen-ager inching toward disaster in a horror movie, she makes her way upstairs to his apartment and approaches the door. Inside, there's a guy whose face and body are covered with hair; he has a disease called hypertrichosis. The movie, however, treats hairiness not as a medical problem or a nasty quirk of nature but as a condition of virile sainthood; beneath the matted fur, we see only beseeching eyes and soft lips. His name is Lionel, and he's a quietly dominating type who murmurs to Diane in confiding tones and orders her around. Step by step, Arbus's life with her husband and children gives way to her life in the strange apartment, which is half junk shop, half enchanted castle. Lionel introduces her to a netherworld of outcasts and freaks, whom the movie handles as domesticated trolls. They go to parties at which the subjects of Arbus's later portraits—dwarfs and transvestites and even the Jewish giant himself—sit around and make polite chatter.

In these goings on, there isn't a trace of the Diane Arbus who was friends with many New York artists and intellectuals of the nineteen-fifties, who obsessively studied the work of August Sander and Walker Evans, who took classes from Berenice Abbott and Lisette Model, and who became a highly conscious, fully articulate teacher as well as a daring and even dangerous artist. This Arbus doesn't have an idea in her head, though she sure is a fine lady. The movie is meant to be an erotically charged version of "Beauty and the Beast," but it comes off as Mrs. Miniver Meets Chewbacca. In what is supposed to be a terribly touching scene, Diane shaves off Lionel's body hair, which requires quite a bit of lather. At last, her expert barbering reveals the handsome torso and doleful countenance of Robert Downey, Jr., the wolfman reborn as a lover.



Nicole Kidman as Diane Arbus in Steven Shainberg's movie.

TOM BACHTELL

For sheer not getting the point, this beats anything since Dustin Hoffman made Lenny Bruce into a nice Jewish boy. Diane Arbus did not turn her subjects into normal people. She did not discover hidden nobility and triumphant humanity under the burdens of deformity or madness. On the contrary: her freaks remain freaks. Our American Goya revelled in what was strange and alien about her subjects, and her brutally confrontational style, in which the subjects stare straight back at the camera, turned the attention on us, her audience, and forced the questions "What are you looking at, and who is doing the looking?" Her work, enhanced by enormous formal rigor, is devoted to the ambiguities of fascination and voyeurism. She had our number, and she knew it—which is part of the reason that her pictures have caused furious debate for forty years. But the filmmakers behind "Fur" sentimentalize Arbus, bringing her back into the comfort zone of a woman who is more sensitive than other people to the trials of the unfortunate—exactly the kind of soft fifties liberalism that she knocked to pieces with her conquering stare.

You have to hand it to Peter Mayle. Beginning with "A Year in Provence" (1989), he has squeezed, by my count, twelve books out of the good life in the South of France. He has written memoirs and novels set in the place. He has written about its truffles, its breads, its winds. Now he is rumored to be working on all three volumes of an ambitious trilogy—"The Bells of Provence," "The Cobblestones of Provence," and "The Kitchen Fixtures of Provence." Even under the generous laws of literary entrepreneurship, which permit a writer to repeat himself endlessly in order to make a living, Mayle's is an unusual achievement. I suppose it's only appropriate that he has incorporated his work under the name Escargot Productions, and that the "critical acclaim" quoted in the paperback editions of his books includes the phrases "as light as a soufflé and just as tasty" and (my favorite) "so evocative you can almost feel the bib tied around his chin and sip the last drop of Bordeaux at the bottom of his glass."

In fairness, Mayle's prose is less cloyingly gustatory than that of his fans, though he certainly caters to the more wistful dreams of his British and American readers—the working stiffs who long to chuck their exhausting jobs in dour northern cities and go native on half a million a year. In the film "A Good Year," Russell Crowe plays Max Skinner, an unscrupulous bond trader living in a dark and dreary London, where it's always raining, or about to rain, or has just finished raining—even indoors, it seems, since the decorator colors in the interiors are shades of gray. Max inherits a charming Provençal property, Château La Siroque, from an uncle (Albert Finney) with whom he used to spend the summers—a wise and lusty old gentleman who taught him everything worth knowing about women and wine, and whose affection he has callously forgotten and betrayed. Max intends to stay at the place only long enough to sell it, but falls in love again with the walled medieval village nearby and the loamy valleys that glow in the light. He's stunned by a beautiful young woman (Marion Cotillard) who rides a bicycle with her hair flying in the breeze. The house, we are not entirely surprised to discover, has a vineyard attached to it.

Even judged by the not excessively demanding standards of middle-aged renovation fantasies, "A Good Year" isn't much. After developing the story with the director Ridley Scott, who also owns a property in Provence, Mayle wrote it up as a novel, and the screenwriter Marc Klein turned the book into a movie. It would be nice to report that Crowe and Scott took an enjoyably proficient vacation from heroic filmmaking projects like "Gladiator," but it isn't so. To begin with, "A Good Year" is not a good vehicle for Crowe to relax in. Stocky and bullish, he looks great on the bridge of a ship or holding off barbarians with a lance but exceptionally unhappy in a bespoke suit. Insouciance and suavely devastating remarks are not his style. The designer beard he grew for the movie, always exactly an eighth of an inch long, emphasizes the smallness of his mouth and the furrows in his brow. Crowe must feel the constraint, because when he heads south he becomes all goosey and floppy-limbed, like Mel Gibson on a lark. His authority as an actor evaporates without any accompanying gain, and Scott, who displayed dazzling skill as the director of such movies as "Blade Runner" and "Black Hawk Down," also has trouble finding a suitable tempo and style. The movie is wildly overshot and overcut; the simplest scenes jump around from angle to angle. The filmmakers may love Provence, but they don't trust the audience to love it; even as a travelogue, the movie is a cheat.

After the usual restoration job on the house, we're introduced to a young American girl (Abbie Cornish), who may or may not be the rightful heir to the property, and to the devious machinations of the château's *vigneron* (Didier Bourdon), who may or may not be developing a fabulous boutique red in a corner of the vineyard. There are wily Provençal types, quarrels, and sumptuous meals, but, somewhere between the sunset and the marinated wild boar, the enchantment, along with key details of the plot, slips away with a negligent sigh. ♦

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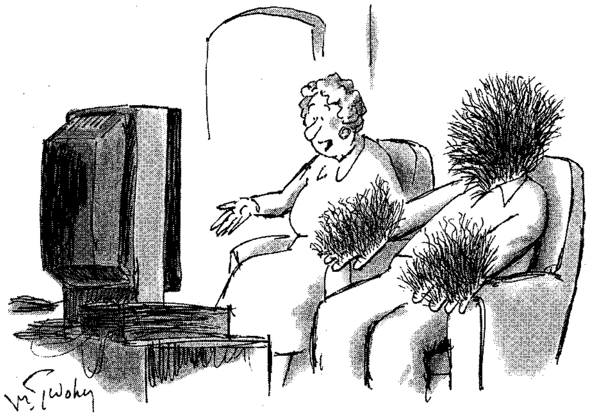
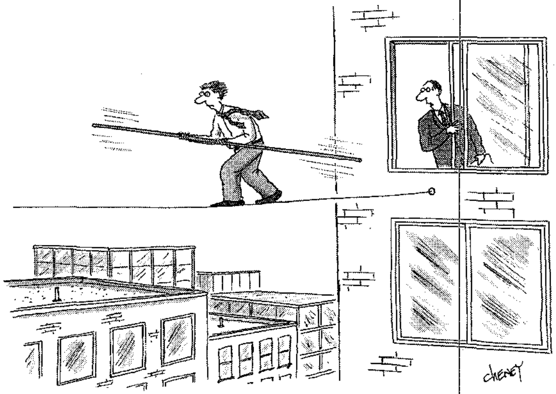
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, November 12th. Finalists in the October 30th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 27th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"They do say results will vary."
Elizabeth Seeley, New Haven, Conn.



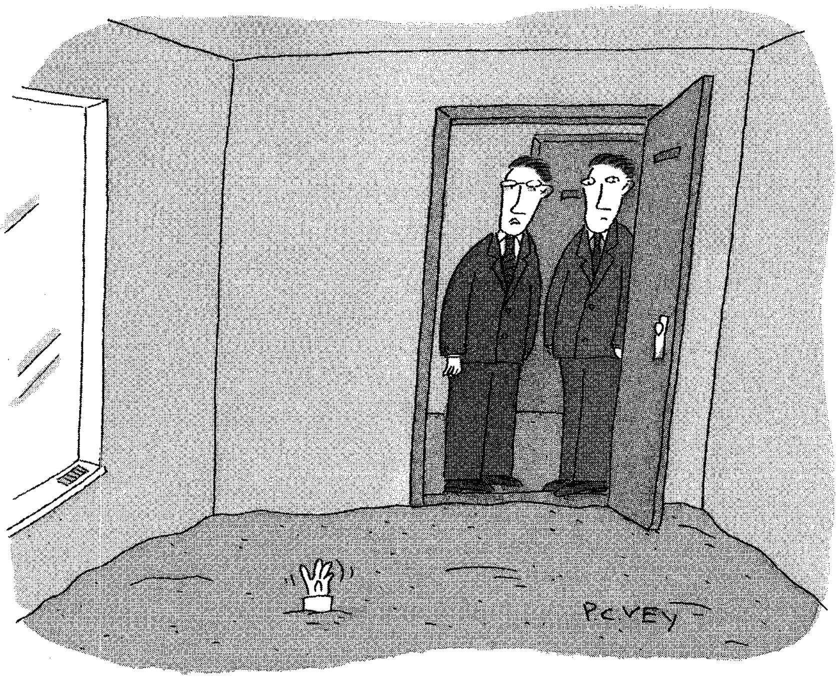
THE FINALISTS

"And make mine a decaf."
Cheryl DiMenna, Baltimore, Md.

"The board just voted to remove the net."
Russell Leach, Parish, N.Y.

"I'll take a cab."
Christo Pirinsky, Santa Monica, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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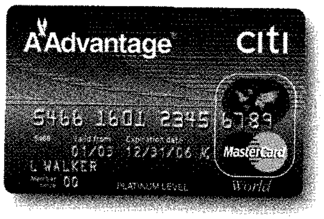

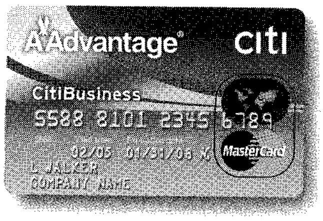

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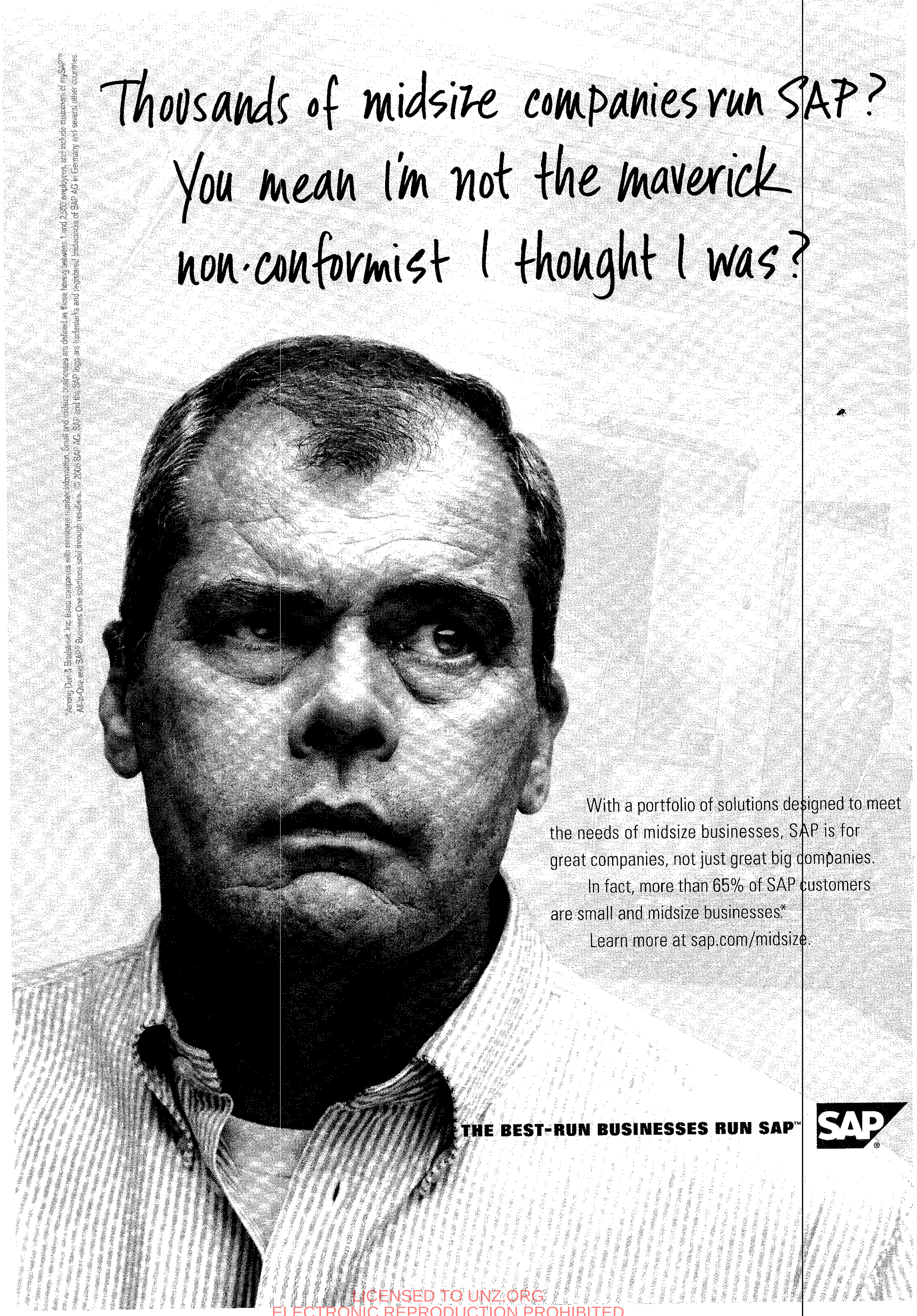

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